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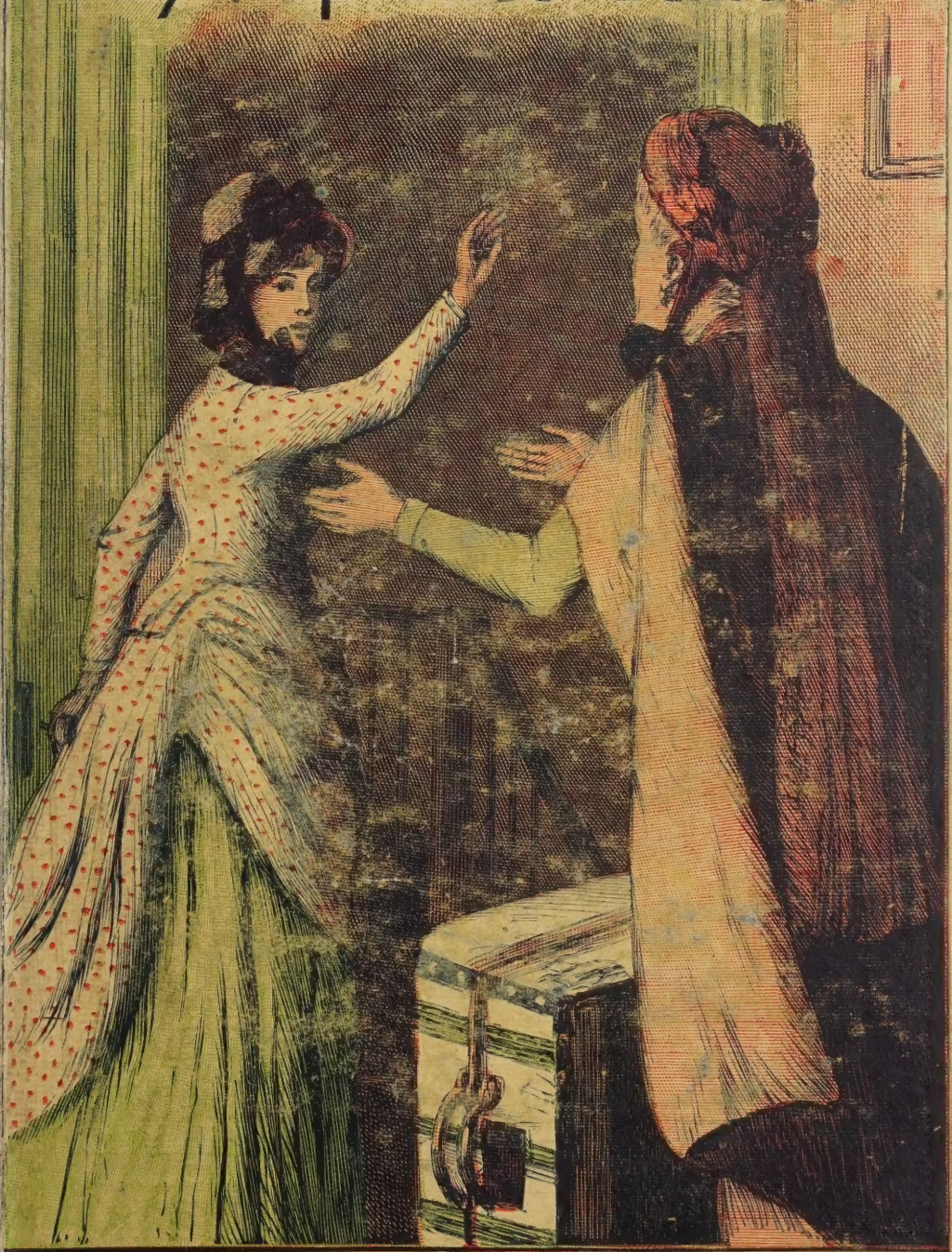

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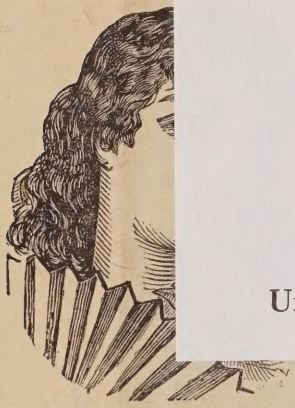

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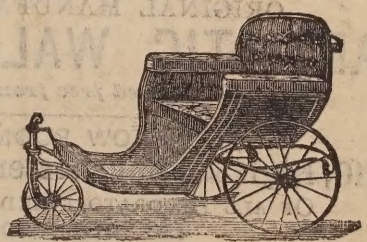

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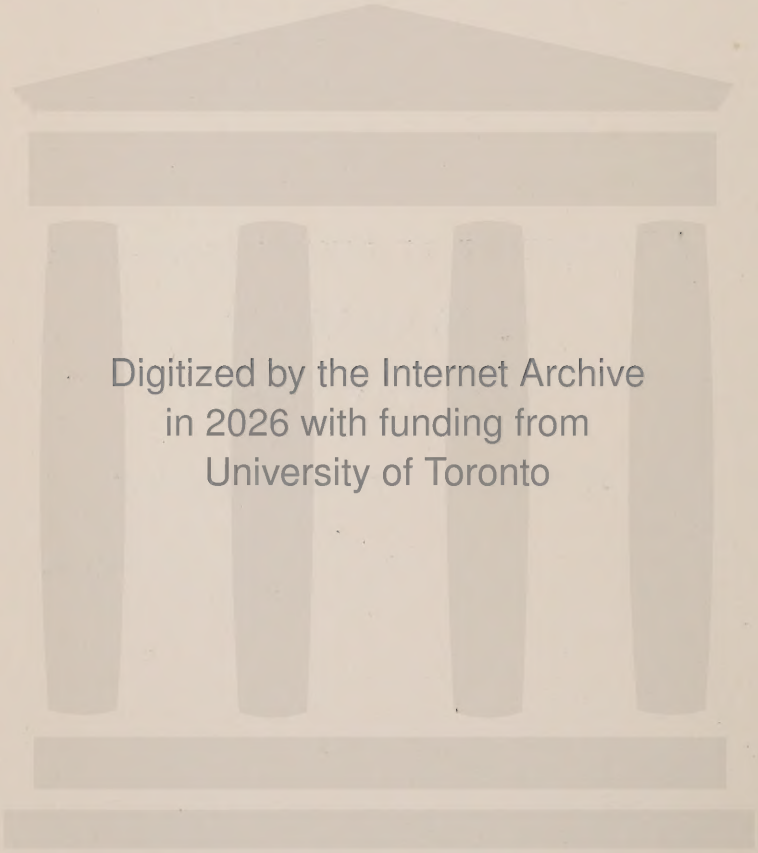
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THE EVANGELIST;

OR,

PORT SALVATION.

CHAPTER I.

GRANDMOTHER.

BACK again, at dusk, to a little house in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce—back from the cemetery, where they have just laid Grandmother. The door is closed—the friends have gone; and Madame Ebsen sits alone with her daughter in the little home (how strange and big it seems!) where every object reminds them of the absent one, and where they feel all the horror of their loss. Even at Montparnasse yonder, when the earth opened to take from them all they loved, they had not realised the irreparable nature, the anguish of the eternal separation, as they do now, sitting by the window, with the empty armchair before them. It is as though Grandmother had died again.

Madame Ebsen has sunk into a chair motionless and prostrate, too weary even to take off her black woollen shawl or the bonnet on which the crape quillings stand so

stiffly above her broad, kindly, tear-stained face. As she dries her swollen eyes, one by one she enumerates the virtues of the departed, mingling with her eulogies of her goodness, and brightness, and courage many an anecdote of her own life and her child's. A stranger listening to her would have heard the whole history of the three women. He would have heard how that M. Ebsen, a Copenhagen engineer ruined by his inventions, had come to Paris twenty years before about a patent for an electric clock which somehow had not worked as well as it might have done, and, in fact, had worked so badly that it had killed its inventor, and stranded his wife at an hotel, with her old mother, in such poverty that she was at her wit's end to know how to pay for her lying-in.

Ah! what would have become of them then but for Grandmother and her untiring little crochet-needle? Night and day the old Dane worked away at her table-covers and antimacassars (they were novelties in Paris at that time), courageously offering them for sale to the fancy shops herself afterwards. It was Grandmother who supported the household, and got baby Eline the nurse she so badly needed. Ah! how many of those delicate lace stars and wheels it took, though, to pay for it all. Dear, dear Grandmother!

And so the lament goes on, interrupted from time to time by sobs and childish say-

ings brought back to the good woman's mind by her bereavement. Very touching, very simple, they sound in her uncouth Copenhagen French, with its foreign accent which even twenty years of Paris had not corrected.

Her daughter's grief is less loud. Very pale and with clenched teeth, but calm to outward seeming, Eline goes about the house, quiet but decided in her movements, and the least bit slow, her shapely and supple figure clad in a sad black dress, brightened only by her thick, fair locks and the bloom of her eighteen years. Silently, as a good housekeeper should, she rekindles the long-neglected and dying embers, draws the curtains, lights the lamp, banishes from the room the cold and darkness that greeted them on their return. Then, while her mother babbles and weeps, she takes off her shawl and bonnet, and the boots all soddened and heavy with earth from the abode of death, puts on her warm slippers, and, taking her by the hand like a child, makes her sit down at the table on which there now stands a smoking soup-tureen and dishes from the neighbouring restaurant. But Madame Ebsen resists. Eat! how can she eat? She is not hungry. The little table, the missing knife and fork, are too much for her.

'Please, Lina, don't ask me to,' she sobs.

'Yes, yes! you must,' says Eline. For

Eline is bent on making her go back to their old ways, and dine in the usual place, that very evening. She knows how much more cruel would be the pain of beginning afresh next morning. How sensible of Lina, kind Lina, practical Lina! Why, the warmth and brightness of fire and lamp have already found their way into the poor frozen heart. Madame Ebsen eats, when at last she does eat, with quite a voracious appetite; as people often do after an exhausting sorrow. She still keeps to the one absorbing subject; but gradually her thoughts about it become changed and softened. Well, at least they had done all in their power to make Grandmother happy, and give her all she wanted up to the very day she died. And what a comfort it had been to them at that dreadful hour to feel they had so much sympathy! What a crowd there had been, too, at the simple funeral; such a crowd that it seemed to blacken the whole street! All her old pupils had come—Léonie d'Arlot, Baronne Gerspach, Paule and Louise de Lostande. Not one had been missing. Then, had they not been fortunate enough to get what the greatest wealth could not have purchased—a sermon from Pastor Aussandon, Dean of the College of Theology, the greatest orator in the Reformed Church; Aussandon who, for more than fifteen years, had not delivered a sermon in Paris? How beautifully he had spoken of family ties! With

what emotion he had reminded them of Grandmother's courage in leaving her native land in her old age to follow her children, never more to forsake them even for a single day!

'Not for a single day!' sighs Madame Ebsen, weeping again at the recollection of the minister's words. And pressing her daughter tight to her heart as she tries to quiet her, she exclaims, 'Ah, Linette, we must love each other more than ever now. You won't leave me, will you?'

Pressing close against her, Eline kisses her grey hairs and answers in low tones, tenderly, trying hard to keep back the tears, 'Never, oh, never, mother.'

Poor mother! The heat—the meal; those three sleepless and miserable nights—have worn her out. See—she sleeps. Eline still goes noiselessly to and fro; clears the table, and puts in order the house which had been so disturbed by the horror and the suddenness of their leaving. She finds the every-day activity dulls the edge of her sorrow for a time. But her courage sinks when she reaches a certain window recess, with the curtain which the dead woman used to keep raised all day long. She has not the heart to put away the many trifles she finds there—trifles that bear the trace of Grandmother's habits and seem worn by her trembling hands that had so often held them; the scissors; the spectacles—taken from the case

to mark a page in a book of Andersen's; the crochet hook, thrust through the unfinished work, sticking out of the little table drawer; and the lace bonnet hanging on the window fastening, with its mauve ribbons drooping and loose.

Eline stops there and thinks.

Her whole childhood lies in that corner. It was there Grandmother taught her to read and sew. While Madame Ebsen was away giving German lessons, little Lina sat at home, on this very stool, listening to the tales the old Danish lady would tell her of her fatherland; drinking in the strange northern legends or the sea-songs of King Christian which she had learnt from her sailor husband. Later on, when Eline had been taught to gain her own livelihood, it was there she took her seat on returning from her daily work; and Grandmother, seeing her in the place she had occupied as a child, would still talk to her with the old protecting tenderness. Towards the end of her life, when her intellect had begun to fail, she often mistook her daughter for her granddaughter, calling Lina, Elizabeth, the name of Madame Ebsen, or chatting with her of her dead husband, mingling their identities and confounding them in her heart; which, indeed, held but a single affection—a double mother's love. Sometimes a chance word would make her aware of her mistake, and she would laugh at it—a child's laugh, almost

an angel's. Alas! Eline will hear that laugh no more. It is stilled for ever. That thought is more than she can bear. The tears which, for her mother's sake (and perhaps from intuitive delicacy), she had checked since the morning, break through with sudden violence, now that she is no longer embarrassed by the demonstrative pity of their friends. She feels her sobs well-nigh choke her, and takes refuge in the next room to give them free vent.

The window is wide open, letting in the night. Damp gusts of wind from time to time seem to shake the bright March moon, scattering its white rays over the tumbled bed, the extinguished tapers, and the two chairs on which the coffin had rested, while, in accordance with the Lutheran rite, the minister prayed beside it in the morning. There are no signs of disorder in the death-chamber; no preparations telling of the horrors of a long illness. Evidently death came as a surprise, annihilating its victim in a few hours. Grandmother, who usually came to this room to sleep, has gone to a deeper sleep—a longer night, and that is all. She had never loved this room. Its sadness, and, above all, its silence (the dread of most aged people) displeased her. You saw nothing from the window but trees, the gardens of M. Aussandon and of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, and the belfry of Saint Jacques-du-haut-pas. Everywhere green upon grey,

verdure on stone—the great charm of Paris, though the dead woman preferred her little corner facing the street, so full of life and movement.

Is it all this touches her? or is it the effect of the deep, stormy sky that seethes and foams in places like a sea? Eline has ceased to weep. At this open window her sorrow grows, widens, and becomes hushed. Before her stretches the road taken by the dear, lost life. And then her eyes look upward, upward to the fleecy clouds and the clear openings in the dark sky.

'Grandmother, are you there? Can you see me?' . . .

Softly and long she calls, talking to her in prayerful tones, till the clocks of St. Jacques and the Val-de-Grâce strike the hour. . . . The bare trees shiver in the evening wind. The whistle of a distant engine, and the sound of a tramway horn, rise above the ceaseless hum and roar of Paris. . . . Eline leaves the balcony on which she had leant in prayer, closes the window, and returns to the adjoining room, to find her mother still sleeping the sleep of a child, and sighing heavily. Watching the good creature's honest face, with its kindly furrows, and its eyes grown small with weeping, Lina thinks of all her unselfishness and her devotion. Still watching, she calls to mind the heavy domestic burden borne so bravely and so cheerfully; the

child that had to be brought up, and the household cares. A man's responsibilities, and never a moment's anger—never a murmur. Still watching, the young girl feels her heart overflow with tenderness and gratitude; and once more resolving to be faithful to her mother, wholly and entirely faithful, she vows that she will love her dearly, and 'never, oh, never leave her.'

A gentle tap at the door. It is a little girl of seven or eight, in a black school frock, and with her flat hair tied up just above her forehead with a light ribbon.

'Is it you, Fanny?' says Eline, talking to her visitor at the door, for fear of awaking Madame Ebsen. 'There will be no lessons to-night.'

'Oh, I know that, Mademoiselle,' says the child, glancing furtively at Grandmother's vacant seat—to see how it all looks when death has come to any one. 'I know that, Mademoiselle; but papa told me to be sure and come up to kiss you because you were in great trouble.'

'You dear, kind child,' says Eline, lovingly, embracing her. 'There, go now, Fanny. You may come and see me again to-morrow. Stay a moment, though. Let me give you a light. It's dark on the stairs.'

As she leans over the balusters holding up the lamp to light the child to her own door just below her, she sees some one standing in the shade, waiting,

'Is that you, M. Lorie?'

'Yes, Mademoiselle, it is I. Make haste, Fanny.'

And with this, gazing timidly upwards at the fair young girl with the clustering tresses gleaming halo-like in the lamplight, M. Lorie launches into a long, an interminable speech, full of flowery and pompous phrases, vaguely suggestive of very costly funeral wreaths. He had not presumed to . . . that is to say, he had not ventured to bring her his tribute of . . . or, in short . . . his condolence. But he stops short suddenly midway in one of the most elaborate of his common-places and exclaims—

'From the bottom of my heart, Mademoiselle Eline, I feel for you.'

'Oh! thank you, thank you, M. Lorie.'

Then M. Lorie takes his little daughter by the hand, and Eline returns to the dining-room; and the two doors, on the ground-floor and the floor above, close at the same moment, as though a common emotion had shaken them.

CHAPTER II.

A FUNCTIONARY.

THE curiosity excited by the moving in of this odd family had not yet subsided. They arrived in a beating rain one October morn-

ing—a genuine moving-in morning. A tall gentleman, dressed entirely in black, with a crape-band round his hat; young enough still, though his serious look and the tightness of the mouth which peeped out from between a pair of regulation service whiskers made him seem old. With him two children, a boy of maybe twelve, in a sailor's hat adorned by a gilt cord and an anchor; and a little girl, holding the hand of a very sunburnt nurse, who wore deep mourning, like her master's, and a Berrichon peasant's cap. Close behind them came a railway porter, loaded with boxes, trunks, and small parcels, piled one atop of the other. And that was all.

'Where is the furniture?' asked the concierge, as he ushered in the new tenants.

'There is none,' calmly answered the nurse in the Berrichon cap; and as the quarter's rent was paid in advance, the man had to rest content with this information.

Where did they sleep? What did they do for tables? What did they sit on? All this was a profound mystery; for the door was hardly ever opened, and, though there were no curtains to the windows, the back and front shutters were always closed; and it was not likely the severe-looking gentleman, who went about in the long frock-coat buttoned up to the chin, would volunteer to enlighten them. Besides, he was never at home. Every morning he went out, seem-

ing very busy, with a leathern portfolio under his arm; and it was always night before he came in again. As to the strapping wench whom they took to be the nurse, she had a peculiar way of jerking her dress aside, and abruptly turning away from inquisitive people, which effectually kept them at a distance. When she went out, the boy walked just in front of her, and the little girl clung as tightly as possible to her skirts. And when she went to the laundry, supporting her bundle of dirty linen on her powerful hip, she made it a rule to lock the children up first most carefully.

No one ever visited these people except a short man in a black straw hat, who looked like one of the watermen you see prowling about the river-side. He had bright eyes, a jaundiced complexion, and when he called, as he usually did, two or three times a week, always carried a large basket in his hand. All that was known about the family, in fact, was the gentleman's name, which, as a visiting card nailed upon the door testified, was—

Charles Lorie-Dufresne,
Sous-Préfet at Cherchell,
Province of Algiers.

A reluctant and regretful pen had struck out all but the name, however; for you see Charles Lorie-Dufresne had just been dismissed; and this is how he had been dismissed. He had been sent out to Algeria

just before the downfall of the Empire; but, thanks to his being so far away, had managed to keep his post under the new Government. Like most French functionaries, Lorie-Dufresne had no very settled political opinions. He was quite as ready to devote himself to the Republic as to the Empire, so long as he was allowed to stay where he was. What mattered a small sacrifice of opinion when, in return, you were lodged gratis in a charming palace by the sea, amidst fragrant groves of orange-trees and bananas, with chaouchs and flaming red-cloaked spahis at your beck and call, riding-horses and carriage-horses ready whenever you needed them to shorten the long and weary distances you had to traverse?

Despite the events of May 16, Lorie did not lose his post. On MacMahon's resignation he trembled for a moment, but once more he escaped dismissal, thanks to the protection of M. Chemineau, the new Préfet. When he was himself a mere Conseiller de Préfecture, this Chemineau, who was ten years older than himself, had unconsciously been his ideal (for most young men model themselves on somebody or something when they begin life), though he was but a crafty and, at bottom, cold-hearted Bourges lawyer. He made up his own well-favoured face to look like Chemineau's, copied his stiff diplomatic airs, his discreet smile, his whiskers, and even his trick of swinging his eye-glasses

about on the tips of his fingers. Long after, when they met again in Algeria, Chemineau almost fancied he saw himself young again as he looked at his old acquaintance; and it was to this flattering resemblance doubtless that Lorie-Dufresne owed his protection. But Chemineau had never had the simple frankness of his subordinate; and latterly he had grown as dry, parchmenty, and pitiless, as the stamped paper on which he once engrossed his legal forms. Unhappily, a few years after the Sous-préfet's arrival at Cherchell, his wife fell ill, a victim of one of those cruel wounds which strike women in the very sources of life. The disease developed quickly in the hot African climate, and Madame Lorie was advised to return to the moister air of her native France, which alone offered a hope of prolonging and perhaps saving the life that was so precious to the whole family. Lorie was about to ask to be transferred to another post, when the Préfet stopped him, saying that, as, fortunately for him, the Government had forgotten his existence, it would be inviting ruin to remind them of it by writing. 'Have a little patience,' added Chemineau. 'When I go back to France I shall manage to take you with me somehow.'

So the poor woman started alone one day for Amboise, in Touraine, where she sought shelter with some distant cousins. She could not even take her children with

her, for the old Gailletons, her hosts, having never had any of their own, cordially detested them, and would as lief have seen a swarm of locusts about their neat little house. There was nothing for it but to submit meekly to the parting, for the opportunity was too good to be lost. At the Gailletons' she would at least have the beautiful Touraine sky and a make-belief of home. It would be cheaper too than going to an hotel, and, at the worst, would only be for a short time. Chemineau was not a man who would vegetate in Algeria long. 'No, no,' said Lorie-Dufresne, quoting a remark of his superior's, 'we shall cross the sea together soon.' The months dragged on, however, and the invalid lost hope. Husbandless, childless, abandoned to the petty persecution of her hosts, racked by the cruel pangs of her disease, she grew sick and desperate. Week after week the same sad complaint crossed the sea. 'My husband! . . . my children!' Each Thursday, the mail day, the poor Sous-préfet trembled to the very tips of his whiskers as, gazing through the telescope of the Cherchell club, he anxiously watched the French packet draw near. There came a last appeal one day, sadder and more heart-breaking than all the rest. When Lorie read it, he made up his mind to set out for France without delay, and see the minister. After all, he would risk less in doing so than in writing. He knew he

would be given a chance of pleading his own cause; and, as he argued, it is much less easy to read a man's death-warrant to him than to sign it at a distance. He argued rightly. The minister happened to be a kindly man, whose bowels of compassion had not been frozen by politics. The little family story, so strangely out of keeping with the grasping tales of ambition to which he listened daily, really touched him.

'Return to Cherchell, my dear M. Lorie,' said he. 'I will arrange this affair for you the very next time there is a change in the Service appointments.'

You may imagine the Sous-préfet's joy as he passed through the gates in the Place Beauvan and jumped into the cab that was to whirl him to the station and the Touraine express. But his arrival at the Gailletons' was less joyful. He found his wife stretched out upon the sofa. She rarely left it now, and spent the long days like a prisoner, drearily watching the grim and massive round tower of the Château d'Amboise facing her. For some time past she had not been living in the Gailletons' own house. When her guest's illness began to look alarming, Madame Gailleton grew dreadfully nervous about the damage her clean floor and furniture seemed likely to suffer from sticky medicines and spilt lamp-oil, and the constant coming and going inevitable in a

sick-room. From morning till night the old lady had her bees'-wax or her scrubbing-brush in her hand. She went about (on all fours sometimes) in a hideous green petticoat, panting and blowing from her exertions, with her hair all tumbled, and altogether very much like a charwoman. Her one idea was to keep her precious house tidy—a white and trim little house of the true Tourangelle pattern, with a red tuft of geranium at each of the windows. At last the invalid had asked to be moved to the vine-dresser's next door, where she was still stopping.

M. Gailleton, who was almost as cruelly precise about his garden as Madame about her house, did not take Lorie to his invalid wife till he had made him admire the military stiffness of his flower-beds, which looked so excessively clean that you might have fancied Madame had been dusting them all with her feather broom.

'You will see at once, cousin,' said he, as he reluctantly turned away from the delightful sight, 'that children would not have done *here* . . . But your wife is waiting; I'm afraid you'll find her greatly changed.'

Changed, indeed, alas, poor soul! Very pale, and her cheeks so sunken that they seemed as though they had been hollowed out with a knife. What could be seen of her worn and attenuated body, that had suffered so much, looked quite deformed under the long, loose dress which covered it. But

Lorie did not notice all this at once, for the gladness she felt at her dear husband's presence for a moment gave her back the brightness and rosy flush of youth. How they embraced each other when the Gailletons at length left them alone and returned to their gardening! She was not to die, then, without seeing one, at least, of her dear ones. She held her husband in her arms once more. And then there came a string of eager questions: How were the children? Were Maurice and Fanny well? And did Sylvanire take good care of them? How they must have grown, and how she looked to see little Fanny!

Suddenly she stopped, however, and, lowering her voice lest the Gailletons might overhear her, sobbed out, 'Oh, take me away, husband. Do take me away! If you did but know how lonely it is to lie here all the livelong day with that dreadful tower weighing me down, down! I never look at it without thinking that it stands between us!' And she told him of the selfishness of the crazy old couple, and how frightened they were when the money for her board reached them a day or two late, and how they doled out the bread and sugar to her, and how rough her nurse was when she lifted her on to her bed. All the pent-up bitterness of the past year was poured into Lorie's ear, and, though he reasoned and expostulated with her, the story cut him to

the heart. He did his best to comfort her by repeating the Minister's promise. At the very next change in the Service he would have another post offered him. 'And changes occur so often nowadays that, Heaven knows, I shall not have to wait long,' he added. In a month, or even a fortnight (nay, the very next morning, perhaps), his appointment might be gazetted. The bare idea of their brilliant prospects almost turned his head; and, letting his fancy run wild, this deluded dreamer built up one airy castle after another, as he had a way of doing; for the poor fellow's experience in the Service had not altered him much. He had nothing of the Chemineau about him but his shaven chin and air of importance.

She laid her head upon his shoulder and listened, drinking in every word as though it had been gospel truth; forgetful of the silent ravages of the disease which at that very moment was killing her.

Next morning—it was one of those bright and exhilarating mornings you so often get on the Loire—they were breakfasting together by the open window (the invalid in bed, with her children's portraits before her), when all at once they heard the rustic stairs creak beneath the heavy hob-nailed boots of their cousin, and, without a word of warning, he burst into the room, holding a copy of the 'Journal Officiel' in his hand. He borrowed the paper regularly

of the ex-clerk of the Tribunal of Commerce, and read it religiously from end to end, from mere habit.

'Well, cousin,' he exclaimed loudly, suddenly losing all his old respect for the high Government official, 'I have seen the list of new appointments . . . You have been—dismissed!'

Lorie snatched the paper away from him, but dropped it again the next instant to hurry to the assistance of his wife, whose face had turned ashy pale with agony.

'It can't be true,' he gasped. 'It can't be true, I say . . . There must be a mistake . . . Yes, that is it—a mistake.'

The Paris express was almost due at Amboise. Four hours would take him to the minister's, and all would be set right. But how could he leave his wife. The ghastly look of death upon her face terrified him. No; he would not leave till he had seen a doctor.

'Don't mind me, husband,' said she; 'don't delay. Go at once!' adding, to persuade him, that she felt much, ever so much better now. So he left her; and when he bade her good-bye, she clasped him in her poor arms so tightly, with such seeming strength, that he went away almost reassured.

That day Lorie-Dufresne reached the minister's too late—his Excellency was not at home to visitors. Two days later, after

waiting for hours in the ministerial ante-chambers, he was ushered into the presence of—M. Chemineau. He was dressed in an easy coat, and appeared very much at home, indeed, in his new quarters.

'Yes, my good fellow,' said Chemineau; 'here I am, you see—in the fortress. And so might you have been if you had had the sense to follow my advice. But you would not listen to me, and you'll have to bear the consequences. It will be a lesson for you. I arrived this morning.'

'But I hoped . . . I hoped . . . that is, I was promised——' stammered out Lorie.

'The Minister could not help himself,' replied Chemineau. 'You were the only 16th of May Sous-préfet left. But what do you wish to say to the Minister, by-the-bye? I can attend to the matter. What is it?'

For a few moments they stood there face to face. Their two pairs of long regulation-whiskers were of exactly the same pattern. Their two pairs of eye-glasses swung round and round the very same fingers. Yet there seemed as great a difference between them as there is between a genuine old master and an inferior copy.

Lorie thought of his wife and children. This place was his one hope, his one resource.

'What shall I do?' he murmured, half-choking.

Chemineau almost pitied him as he stood

there. He advised him to call at the Ministry now and then. As he had himself been appointed Director of the Press, he might be able, some day, to get him a place in his own department.

Lorie went back to his hotel, desperate. A telegram from Amboise was awaiting him. 'Come without delay; she is dying!'

Fast as he travelled, however, Another, faster than he, had gone before him. On his arrival his wife was dead. Dead—all alone, with no one near but the Gailletons. Far from the home she loved. With the dread of what might befall her dear ones on the morrow filling her soul with anguish. Oh, the cruelty, the pitilessness of politics!

Trusting in Chemineau's promises, Lorie remained in Paris. Of what use would it have been to return to Africa? The servant could bring the children over, settle the few small accounts he owed, and pack up his private papers, clothes, and books for him. Nearly all the rest—the furniture, the linen, and the crockery—was Government property.

Sylvanire deserved the confidence he had in her. She had lived with the family over twelve years, ever since Lorie's marriage at Bourges, when he was only a Conseiller de Préfecture. They had engaged her as a wet-nurse for their first-born soon after she had fallen a victim (like many another simple country girl) to the fascination of a young officer from the School of Artillery,

who, after betraying her, had left her to perish in the streets with a child, which happily did not live long. Human charity was for once rewarded. The great strapping wench served the Lories thenceforward with all the strength of the simplest, most perfect devotion. As to love—she had had enough of its surprises for her lifetime. 'Love, indeed!' she would sometimes say; 'we know what that means. A litter, and the hospital!' She was proud, too, of having for a master a Government official with an embroidered coat and a crush hat.

Sylvanire set about her task in her usual calm and easy way. The voyage was a long one, and the winding-up of Lorie's affairs much more difficult than Lorie would have imagined, for it swallowed up all her own little savings, and much besides. It was sad enough for them all when, stepping out of the carriage at the station, she issued from the crowd leading by the hand the two children, dressed in their brand-new mourning — one of those poignant little domestic dramas acted daily and hourly at the railway stations, which pass unnoticed in the din and confusion of the porters' trucks and the wrangling at the custom-houses. But it would never have done for a man with imposing Chemineau whiskers to betray any signs of emotion. So Lorie made a great pretence of fuss and bustle about trifles, which deceived nobody; for the tears would

break through from time to time, even in the middle of the most commonplace remarks.

'But where—where is the luggage?' sobbed Lorie.

Sylvanire, who was even more moved than himself, replied that there was such a lot of it she had been obliged to ask Romain to send it on by a slow train.

'Oh, if Romain is attending to it' . . . His tears prevented him from ending the sentence with 'it will be all right.' The children did not weep, however. They were stupefied by their long journey, and too young yet to understand how much they had lost; how sad it was never again to be able to say 'Mother' to her who was ever ready to forgive.

Poor little Algerians! Paris looked forbidding indeed to them after the deep blue sky, the sunshine, and the ease of the land they had left. Dismal enough seemed their one room on the third floor of the hotel in the Rue du Mail, with its damp, dingy walls and rickety furniture. Dismal enough, too, the daily *table d'hôte* at which they saw so many strange faces, and were bidden not to talk; and those walks they took under the umbrella with their nurse, who did not dare to venture further than the Place des Victoires, for fear of losing her way.

Meanwhile their father was running all over the town in search of work that would allow him to wait for the post he expected to

get at the Ministry. What work? When you have been in the Service twenty years you are fit for little else. The hollowness and shams of official life have worn you out and made you commonplace. He could turn a letter in the approved Service style; make it as colourless and insipid as another; round off his phrases till they ceased to have any meaning; say a great deal, in fact, without saying anything. He knew the countless forms of hierarchical greeting by heart; could tell you exactly when you ought to begin your letter by a 'Dear old Comrade,' and how you should address a Judge, a Bishop, or the head of a Corporation. He could fight the battle of the Service, when it was attacked by its irreconcilable enemy the magistracy; had a proper bureaucratic love of pigeon-holing, and classifying, and docketing; could pay his afternoon visit to the wife of a Judge or a General, and entertain her with vague nothings which compromised nobody; could stand with his back to a fireplace with his coat-tails slightly tucked up and his eye-glass dangling in mid-air from the tip of his finger; could praise effusively, contradict gently, with a 'Pardon me, my dear sir,' which almost made his adversary think he had converted him; could preside over an agricultural meeting, distribute prizes, quote Horace and Montaigne, modulate his voice to suit a gathering of conscripts, children, priests, working-men,

rustics, or sisters of charity ; and, in a word, understood the routine Humbug and Claptrap of the Service better than any one but Chemineau. But of what use would all this be to him now ? Was it not melancholy that a man of forty should have only empty phrases and platform tricks to earn his own living and his children's by ?

Pending his appointment to that place at the Ministry, the ex-Sous-préfet had to accept what work he could get of a Theatrical Copying Agency. A dozen poor wretches met round a long table every day on the first floor of a house in the Rue Montmartre, where it was so dark that the gas had to be kept always burning. They rarely spoke while they were writing, and scarcely knew each other. Chance had thrown them together there like patients in a hospital, or lodgers in a night refuge ; and their threadbare elbows, feverish eyes, and half-starved faces, told of misery and ruin—perhaps worse. Now and then, but not often, he met a stray half-pay officer with a yellow ribbon in his button-hole, whose well-brushed clothes and comfortable face told you he was not in actual want like the rest of them, and had only come there to earn what he needed to eke out his small pension. They all wrote the same round hand, and used the same shaped paper (specially made very smooth so that the pen could travel faster over it). Innumerable were the

dramas, vaudevilles, operettas, and comedies they copied out, plodding on with the dull, mechanical patience of oxen, till their eyes ached from poring over the manuscript. Yet Lorie found some amusement in his task, too, especially at first; and took quite a lively interest in the comicalities of the farces and the moving incidents of the modern dramas, though the plots were all founded on the one idea of adultery—dished up to the public with every imaginable kind of seasoning.

How on earth can they invent such things? he sometimes thought to himself, as he came away dazed by the ingenious unreality of the plays he had been at work on. What struck him particularly was, the luxuriant fare the characters always indulged in. They drank champagne and ate venison pasties on the slightest provocation. Often, as he wrote out the stage instructions, he blushed as he crumbled the penny roll in his coat-pocket, which was the only meal *he* was likely to get. Real life and stage life are very different, thought Lorie.

He made three or four francs a day at the business, and might have earned twice that sum if he had been allowed to take away the manuscripts at night. But this was against the rules. Meanwhile, Cheminneau put him off from week to week; the hotel bill grew larger and larger, and he had three hundred francs to pay for the carriage

of his luggage. Three hundred francs for luggage! He could not credit it, till he had actually seen what an array of trunks and packing-cases, with his address on them, were stored away under the shed at Bercy. Finding it impossible to make a selection, Sylvanire had carried off everything—old clothes, old papers, all the odds and ends which wandering Government officials usually rid themselves of when they change their place of residence; all the rubbish accumulated during the past ten years; his own old embroidered kepis, his dead wife's dresses, the mother-of-pearl sword-handles he once used on grand occasions, and even whole piles of worthless pamphlets on the phylloxera. You could have stocked an old curiosity shop with the contents of the boxes which Romain had corded so carefully.

Of course it was impossible to find room for the luggage at the hotel, so they had to look out for private lodgings. The little ground-floor apartment in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce pleased Lorie directly he saw it. The house and the street had a provincial calm about them, and the Luxembourg Garden was close at hand for the children to play in. The moving-in was quite merry. The little ones found endless pleasure in opening the trunks and renewing acquaintance with their toys and treasures. Fanny got her doll again; Maurice was once more gladdened by the sight of his tool-chest. The

contrast between their new Bohemian encampment and the monotonous hotel was in itself delightful. They had many useless things in the place, but few useful ones. Candles were stuck into eau-de-Cologne bottles, as they had no candlesticks, and newspapers did duty for plates and dishes. That night of their arrival they only laughed at the discomfort. After a very, very slender dinner, when the mattresses had been unrolled and the boxes piled one on the top of the other, Lorie-Dufresne gravely inspected his apartment by the light of a candle. It looked terribly like a warehouse, but he put a good face on the matter. 'To be sure it's rather empty,' said he; 'but, at all events, we are at home now.'

Next morning things appeared rather less cheerful. The carriage and the quarter's rent they had been obliged to pay in advance had swallowed up every farthing of his money. So much had been spent already on travelling and those visits to Paris. Then he had had to settle with the Gailletons, and buy a tiny grave in the cemetery at Amboise (she had filled so small a place in life), and winter was approaching, a hard, bitter winter such as they had never known in Algeria. The children had neither clothes nor boots and shoes suited to the climate; but fortunately they had Sylvanire. The good creature was invaluable to them. She washed, and sewed, and mended; cleaned

her master's dirty gloves, and repaired his broken eye-glass with brass wire; for the ex-official was as particular as ever about his personal appearance. But her functions did not stop there. She did the negotiating at the second-hand shops in the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, and sold Lorie's old books and pamphlets, not to speak of those far more precious relics, the silver-braided coats and waistcoats. One of these coats, by the way (it was so much worn that the dealers had refused to make an offer for it), did duty as a dressing-gown, and helped Lorie to save the solitary garment which he had to wear when he went out. It was worth a day's journey to see him shivering in his faded finery, as he paced up and down his rooms to warm himself (looking very dignified in spite of all), while Sylvanire wore her eyes out stitching by the feeble candle-light, and the children slept, as children will sleep, in the empty packing-cases which had been converted into bedsteads to save them from the cold stone floor. Never, in the wildest farces he had copied out, had Lorie-Dufresne come across so strange or striking a 'situation.'

CHAPTER III.

ELINE EBSEN.

SEATED in her corner by the window, Grandmother used to watch every movement of the people downstairs. Her hands had come to tremble so that they made her drop the stitches in her work. The volume of Andersen shook as she held it, and the poor old lady had hardly any amusement but that she got out of the street. Few people passed by, too. A white-epauletted nurse from the Val-de-Grâce infirmary, a collegian with his embroidered collar, or two good sisters, with caps like great white wings, came and went with the automatic regularity of the figures one sees in Jacquemart's compositions; and this was about all. The arrival of the Lories was therefore a welcome relief to her. She knew exactly at what time the father went to his office, what the servant bought at market, and on what days the man with the basket came to the house. But she felt most interested in the little girl with the thin, bare legs, who clung to her nurse so tightly and seemed so chilly as she picked her way across the puddles. Grandmother soon came to the conclusion that the nurse was cruel. She knew the child's wardrobe by heart, and, as she sat there

alone for hours at a time, waxed very indignant over her two shabby black frocks and down-at-heel boots. 'Did you ever see such a thing!' she would mutter. 'They'll make the dear child lame if they don't mind. It would be so easy to have them heeled.' If it came on to rain and the little girl had not her cloak on, she would get quite uneasy; nor did she recover her equanimity till she saw the nurse standing at the corner of the Boulevard St. Michel, in the midst of a brood of pigeons, with the boy on one side of her and the girl on the other, waiting to cross, in mortal dread of being run over.

'Go on; don't be afraid,' the old lady would impatiently murmur, as if they could hear her, making signs to them from behind the window-panes.

Madame Ebsen, who was inclined to be sentimental, paid more attention to the gentleman lodger. His polished manners and black crape hatband made a great impression on her. Evidently he was a widower, for you never saw the mother. And the two women had many a long talk together about their neighbours.

Eline, who was engaged in teaching most of the day, troubled herself far less about the Lories; but the poor little motherless children, who seemed so lost and friendless in Paris, filled her with pity. She always had a smile for them when they met, and even tried to make their acquaintance,

despite the churlishness of the woman with the Berrichon cap. On Christmas Eve, or 'Juliaften,' a festival which the Ebsens kept religiously, in accordance with the time-honoured Danish custom, she invited them, together with several other children of their own age, to eat the *risengroed* with them, and the other sweets hung on the branches of the Christmas-tree, amongst the lighted tapers and tiny lanterns. What a bitter disappointment it was to them to hear Sylvanire reply from behind the half-opened door that they never went out to parties—master had forbidden it; and to hear the happy shouts, songs, and music overhead all that evening, and the sound of little feet dancing merrily round the fir-tree! M. Lorie told Sylvanire she had obeyed his orders rather too strictly, though, that time; and, it being a holiday next day, had them dressed in their best and took them with him to call on the Ebsens.

They were all three at home. At first the simple creatures appeared just a little disconcerted by the ceremonious entry of the ex-Sous-préfet and his little boy and girl; but Fanny's pretty ways soon got rid of the stiffness of the introduction. She was delighted to be near the young lady who smiled at her so sweetly, and the old lady who was always watching them from behind the window. Eline took the child on her lap, and, filling her pockets with the sweetmeats left from the night before, set her talking.

'What! seven years old already?' said Eline. 'I suppose you go to school, then?'

'Oh, no, Mademoiselle,' hurriedly replied the father, as if he feared Fanny might make some imprudent disclosure. 'She is very delicate, and it would not do to let her begin her studies too soon. My boy, now, is as strong as a giant. He needs to be in *his* profession.'

'And what may that be?' inquired Madame Ebsen.

'He is to be a sailor,' said the father, without a moment's hesitation. 'When he turns sixteen he is to go into the naval school. Ha! Maurice; what do you think of that? The Borda!' added he, turning to the boy, who was lolling dejectedly on a chair, and lifting him with a sudden jerk.

On hearing the name of the training-ship, Fanny's eyes flashed proudly. As for the future cadet, he merely twisted about the badges on his cap; bent his nose towards the ground — one of those dreadful noses some growing children are afflicted with, which seem to say to the rest of the body, 'Come, make haste, I'm going on;' started at the word 'Borda;' gasped out what *may* have been an ecstatic 'Ah,' and relapsed into crushed silence.

'The Paris air has affected him rather,' remarked M. Lorie, to account for his dejected bearing; and he went on to explain that they were only going to stay in Paris

a short time to settle a few business matters, and had consequently only half-furnished their apartment. In fact, they were short of a great many trifles. He said all this with such a grand air, gracefully pressing his hat against his hip, dangling his eyeglass from his finger, and lighting up the solemn cast of his regular and aristocratic features by such extremely subtle smiles, that Madame Ebsen and her mother were fairly dazzled.

Eline, too, although she could not help thinking him somewhat pedantic, was touched by the feeling and unaffected way in which he spoke of his wife's death. His voice for one brief moment grew so low and hoarse that you would hardly have believed it to be the same man's. She saw, too, from various details of the little girl's dress, which showed signs of darning about the neck, though it was her very best, and from the strings of her hat, which were unmistakably dyed, that in spite of their visitor's fine phrases he could not be very rich; and their poverty, which she now suspected to be much more abject than she had ever before imagined, made her sympathy all the greater.

A few days after this visit Sylvanire rang distractedly at the Ebsens' door, and told them Fanny was very, very ill. The attack had come on quite suddenly, and, her master being out, in her terror she had rushed for

help to the only person she knew in the great city. Eline and her mother went down at once. On entering the apartment, they recoiled in dismay at the miserable sight which greeted them. The three bare rooms were fireless and curtainless. Furniture was there none, save the huge piles of ragged books and cardboard boxes which were heaped together in every corner, two or three mattresses, a few cooking utensils, and innumerable packing-cases of all shapes and sizes; some of which (the empty ones) served as chairs and tables, while others did duty as receptacles for the rags and dirty linen of the family. On one of them (marked 'Fragile') stood two or three plates, a crust of bread, and a scrap of cheese, left from the last night's dinner. In another lay a pale, peaked, little girl, who, but for her shivering, might have been a child-corpse laid out between the cold bare boards of her bier. Beside her sat the future hero of the Borda, sobbing, regardless of the martial cap he had on.

The arrangement of the rooms corresponded with that in the apartment on the first-floor; and it was with a pang of remorse that Eline compared their own snug and cheerful little drawing-room and bedrooms with the wretched dog-kennel they were standing in. What misery may we not live next to without suspecting it! Involuntarily she recalled M. Lorie's air of fashion and ease,

and remembered how he had played with his eyeglass as he confessed to them, in a casual, indifferent tone, that 'they were short of a good many trifles.' Ay, a good many indeed—fire, and wine, and warm clothes, and blankets, and boots. Little children have been known to die for want of these trifles.

'Fetch a doctor—at once!' said Eline.

Fortunately M. Aussandon's son, who was an army surgeon, happened to be staying on a few days' visit with his parents. Madame Ebsen hurried off to fetch him, while Eline set to work tidying up the room as well as she could with Sylvanire, who had quite lost her head, and was going about clumsily bumping the iron bedstead they had brought down against the walls, dropping the logs of wood, with which Grandmother had filled her apron, all over the staircase, and feebly exclaiming, 'What will master say! What will master say!'

'Well!' said Eline, who had been awaiting the end of the consultation in the next room, as soon as M. Aussandon's gold-laced cap had disappeared in the foggy garden. Madame Ebsen was radiant. 'It's nothing serious, dear,' she replied. 'Only a bilious fever. A few days' rest and nursing will set her right. Look at her! She seems better already now that she has been put to bed.' Then, bending over her daughter, she whispered, 'He asked after you so kindly.

Do you know I believe he has not given up all hope of winning you yet.'

'Poor fellow!' said Eline, as she tucked her patient into the tiny bed in which she herself had slept when she was a child. Fanny's eyes seemed to smile at her as she did so, and just then she felt something warm and moist on her hand like the caress of a great Newfoundland dog. It was Sylvanire thanking her in her dumb fashion, and weeping. The woman could not be so bad as Grandmother fancied, after all.

When M. Lorie came home that evening Fanny was sleeping peacefully, with the clean muslin curtains drawn round her head. A bright fire burnt in the grate, white curtains hung at the windows, a table and an arm-chair stood in front of the hearth, and the light of a lamp cast a faint reflection upon the ceiling. In every corner of the child's bedroom, and only there, you saw the traces of a tender and motherly hand.

A close intimacy sprang up between the two families after this. The Ebsens virtually adopted Fanny. They were constantly sending for her, and she never went away without taking some acceptable present with her. One day it would be a pair of mittens, the next a pair of socks or a woollen comforter. Eline gave her an hour's lesson every evening, too, after she had done her work. The little thing had much to learn, for her education had been sadly neglected.

She had been left to the care of the servants so long that her head was stuffed with old wives' tales; while her natural refinement of speech and manner was hidden beneath a surface roughness such as children often get when they are put out to nurse. Leaving her mother to look after Fanny's bodily comfort, Eline did her best to free her from the influence of the kitchen and restore her to her proper place as a young lady; taking care, of course, not to wound kind-hearted, irascible Sylvanire more than was unavoidable.

What would Lina not have accomplished by the magic of her grace and sweetness? A word said by her to the Baroness Gerspach, at whose house Chemineau was an occasional visitor, sufficed to get Lorie a place in the hitherto inaccessible office of M. le Directeur. Two hundred francs a month, minus the usual deduction. It was not a great deal, certainly, but it was a step towards something better to have been once more admitted to the Service it pained him so cruelly to be banished from. What delight to be able to rummage amongst his beloved documents again; to sniff the familiar odour of the musty cardboard boxes, and feel that he had again become a wheel in that majestic, monstrous, complicated, tumble-down Marly machine, the French Civil Service! It made Lorie-Dufresne almost young again.

How pleasant it was, after the fatigue of business, to join Fanny upstairs in the unpretending drawing-room, with its simple old-fashioned furniture; the heavy Empire console table from Copenhagen, and the electric clock which had caused all their misfortunes by so obstinately refusing to strike, contrasting so oddly with the handsome lounge and *cloisonné* flower-stand, presents of their wealthy pupils! The old lady's lace antimacassars, and tablecloths, and mats gave an antiquated air of repose to the whole picture, in which the three ages of woman were so charmingly and worthily represented by the grandmother, her daughter, and her grand-daughter.

While Eline attended to Fanny and her books, Lorie would entertain Madame Ebsen with long stories of his past grandeur, as fallen potentates will do. He never wearied of telling her of the marvels of his administration, and the services he had rendered the colony, by his powers of organisation. Sometimes, bethinking himself all at once of a speech he had made at some inauguration ceremony, he would begin reciting whole passages from it, and stretching out his hands towards an imaginary audience, would exclaim, 'Plenty of room for every one, and lots to be done. A new country, gentlemen, a new country!'

Over in the corner, where Grandmother slumbered behind her spectacles, the lamp

shone on a quieter group. There you might have seen Fanny bending over her book, and Eline seated beside her, gently protecting her, as it seemed, with her arm round her waist. Outside, scarcely twenty steps from the peaceful provincial street, you heard the roar and rattle of the Boulevard St. Michel, where the noisy students were trooping down to the Bal Bullier, of which they sometimes caught the distant echoes. It was Paris, with its dual life, which it is so hard to understand and unravel. On Sunday evenings the Ebsens usually had a few visitors, and the piano candles were lighted. Among their regular guests were two heavy, silent Danish families, whom they had known ever since their arrival in Paris, and who ranged themselves stiffly all round the room directly they entered. Then there was M. Birk, the young Copenhagen minister, who officiated at the Danish Church in the Rue Chauchat. In the time of M. Larsen, the minister who had preceded him, Eline had been the volunteer organist of the church, and she had continued to perform her musical duties when he was replaced by M. Birk, who, therefore, felt it incumbent on him to pay her a polite call now and then, though at bottom he had no more liking for her than she for him. The new minister was a big, burly fellow, with a tawny beard, and a regular, commonplace face much pitted with small-pox, which gave him a vague resemblance to one of

those worm-eaten saints you find in country churches. He affected the most edifying austerity; but beneath his pious exterior was a very ordinary man of business, keenly alive to his own interest, who had quite resolved not to lose any opportunity he might get of making a good match while he tarried in Babylon, as many other Paris Protestant ministers had done before him. Not that he expected to find what he was in search of at the house of such humble people as the Ebsens. Perhaps this would have accounted for the exceeding shortness of his visits, though he let it be supposed the real reason was, that the society he met there was hardly orthodox enough to suit him. And to be sure, the Ebsens did not inquire very particularly into the religion of their guests. Yet this had not prevented M. Larsen and Pastor Aussandon from coming to their Sunday receptions for a good many years.

The venerable Dean was only separated from his neighbours by a small garden, in which he spent much of his time pruning his favourite rose-bushes; while his despotic and combative little wife watched him, with her cap cocked fiercely on one side, ready to call the great man indoors at the very first breath of cold wind. 'Aussandon,' you would hear her say, 'come in.' 'Yes, Goody,' he would meekly reply, obeying her like an infant.

Living so near each other, and having frequent occasion to see each other about the translations of the minister's lectures on ecclesiastical history, the two families had grown very intimate; and, not long before Lorie came to live in the house, Paul, the youngest of the Aussandons, whom his mother always spoke of as 'the Major,' had asked Eline Ebsen to marry him. Unfortunately, the life of an army surgeon is a wandering and unsettled one. Eline would not leave her mother and grandmother, so she answered him, 'No!' immediately, never letting any one guess the pain her refusal cost her. Since then they had not been on quite such a friendly footing. Madame Aussandon avoided her neighbours as much as she could, and, though they bowed when they met, they did not visit each other. The Sunday evenings were much duller for the circumstance, as the Dean was very merry when he liked, and Goody very noisy—especially when Henriette Briss happened to be there to discuss theology with her.

This Henriette Briss was an old maid of thirty or thirty-five, Norwegian, and a Catholic, who, after living in a Christiania convent for ten years, had been obliged to leave it on account of her bad health, and had ever since been trying to drop back into what she called the worldly life. Accustomed to routine and unquestioning obedience, she had lost all initiative and sense of

responsibility. She flitted aimlessly about the world, like a frightened bird that has fallen out of its nest, uttering plaintive cries of distress, and finding her experience dreadfully bewildering. For all that, she was both intelligent and well-educated, spoke several languages, and had been a governess in several wealthy Russian and Polish families. But she did not stay long anywhere. The realities of life were continually shocking her, now that she had no longer the blinding, clinging, protecting white veil of her Order to hide them from her.

'Let us be practical,' she would say, hoping to get strength and guidance from the maxim. Practical! No one could well have been less so than this poor distraught creature, with her dyspeptic face, her untidy hair twisted up under her ugly travelling hat, and her rich but faded and unseasonable dresses, which she was in the habit of buying cheap of her mistresses. Although a devout and zealous Catholic, she was Liberal and even Revolutionary in her ideas. Her views were wild and contradictory—Garibaldi was as great a hero to her as Père Didon. At the end of a very short time she invariably managed to scandalise her employers, and was dismissed. Whenever this happened, she started off post-haste to Paris—the only place in which the atmosphere was exciting enough for her nerves—and there rapidly ran through her slender sav-

ings. When you imagined, possibly, that she was at Moscow or Copenhagen, Henriette would arrive, looking very contented and relieved, take a room in some cheap hotel, and be seen next morning listening to a fashionable preacher, visiting a convent, or chatting to a priest in some sacristy. She was diligent in her attendance at the theological lectures, and always took notes while they were delivered, which she wrote out again neatly afterwards. Her dream was to become a Catholic journalist; and she wrote letter after letter to Louis Veuillot, who took not the slightest notice of them. Finding no other means of getting rid of her stock of ideas, wherever she went, and especially at the house in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, she vented her exuberance in oral controversy; arguing and quoting texts by the hour, till her mouth became parched, and her head ached with the effort of proclaiming her religious faith. When all her money was spent (it always surprised her immensely to discover that it *was* spent), she would accept the first place that offered, start off on a new trip, and for a season no one heard anything more of her.

She had reached the periodic discouragement stage when Lorie first met her at the Ebsens'; and, indeed, in this case there was some cause to be discouraged, for she had deferred looking out for work so long, and the people to whom she had applied showed

so little alacrity in replying, that she had been obliged to ask for lodgings at a convent in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, frequented chiefly by servants out of place. Here her democratic sentiments were put to a rude test. Her love of the people rather cooled when she came into actual, hourly, contact with vicious and hypocritical creatures who, after piously crossing themselves in the chapel, or in the entrance-hall with the curious stations of the Cross, would unblushingly pick their fellow-lodgers' locks in the bedrooms the next minute, sing obscene songs in the work-room, and lie to the ladies who asked for them at the convent. Every Sunday she used to pour her misfortunes into the ears of the Ebsens, tell them how the wretches hid away their showy hair-pins under quiet caps when there was a visitor, and how sick she was of the low sights and sounds she had to tolerate. But her friends, though they were very fond of her, had given up offering her assistance. The money intended to pay for her room was invariably squandered away in reckless or foolish charity. The Ebsens would willingly have had her to stay with them, but they had no room.

Henriette had sense enough not to take offence at the distrust shown her by her acquaintances. 'Why am I not practical,' she regretfully exclaimed one evening, 'like you or M. Lorie?'

'I don't know whether I am very practical or not,' smilingly replied Eline; 'but I am certainly constant to my plans, and find pleasure in the tasks I set myself.'

'Well, Lina, the task set me is teaching children, but I don't get much pleasure out of that. To begin with, I hate children. It's quite horrid to have to lower oneself to their level to make them understand you. Why, it's degrading.'

'Oh, Henriette!' cried Eline, looking at her with horror. This negation of motherly feeling, and by a woman, too! seemed monstrous to her. She loved them all, little and big. Those who were old enough to run about and read, and those who were only soft baby bundles, good for nothing but to be kissed and petted. Why, she walked home through the garden of the Luxembourg every day merely to hear their voices, to watch them shovelling the gravel with their spades, and enjoy the sight of them sleeping under the nurses' capes and perambulator hoods. She had a smile for all their pretty, inquiring faces, and when she came on a tender head exposed to the intemperate wind or burning sun, would pounce upon the careless nurse in a moment, and bid her attend to the child. You had only to look at the two women, though, to understand the difference between them. The one, with her small head, calm face, and shapely figure, seemed born to be a mother; the other had

the ungraceful angles and long, flat, bony hands you meet with in the rude pictures of the old masters.

Sometimes Madame Ebsen joined in the discussion. 'My dear Henriette,' she would say, 'if you dislike bringing up children so much, why don't you go home to your parents? They are old and lonely, you tell me. Your mother is an invalid. I should think you would be a great help to her in the house.'

'I might as well marry at once,' sharply replied Henriette. 'No, thank Heaven! I am not a housewife. I hate your low work that only keeps the hands employed.'

'You could think all the same,' put in Eline. But Henriette went on without listening to her. . . . 'Besides, my parents are poor, I should be a burden to them. . . . And they are peasants . . . they would never understand me.'

Madame Ebsen flamed up at this. 'Oh, these Papists and their convents! Not content with robbing people of their sons and daughters, the natural stays and comforts of their old age, they must needs kill even the very remembrance and love of their home. Ay, they're nice places, those godly prisons of yours!'

Henriette Briss did not lose her temper. She took up the defence of her beloved convent, however, warmly, invoking all the texts and arguments she could think of. Had she

not spent eleven delightful years in one of those prisons, as Madame Ebsen called them, morally annihilated and merged in God? and had not the awakening from her long dream been very hard and dreary? 'Believe me, Madame Ebsen,' said she, 'the convent is the only refuge for the noble and pure-minded.'

At this the good woman almost choked with indignation.

'What wicked nonsense!' she exclaimed. 'You had better go back to your nuns . . . A pack of lazy hussies and mad women!'

The rest of the discussion was lost in a ripple of notes. The 'wallflowers' began to brighten up and drew their chairs nearer to the table, while, in her pure, though rather languid, voice, Eline sang a ballad of Chopin's. Then came Grandmother's turn. They pressed her to give them an ancient Scandinavian air, which Lina translated verse by verse for Lorie. Raising herself in her arm-chair, the old lady feebly sang the heroic song of King Christian, 'who stood by the mainmast wrapt in smoke,' or the melancholy invocation to the absent father-land—

> Denmark, thy fair fields and meadows,
> Bounded by deep blue waves. . . . .

Her voice is heard no longer at the Ebsens'. The piano is mute. The candles in the drawing-room are never lighted.

Grandmother has gone to another country which nothing bounds, and where the meadows are fair beyond description, but so vast, so distant, that none who ever visit them return.

CHAPTER IV.

'MORNING HOURS.'

A FEW days after Grandmother's death, the little Lories were alone in their lodgings. Their father was away at his office, Sylvanire had gone out marketing, and the door was carefully double-locked as usual. Sylvanire, who was not a bit less nervous than when she arrived in Paris, still firmly believed that children were bought and sold on a gigantic scale there. What became of them afterwards she hardly knew. Perhaps they were carried away by the street acrobats. Perhaps by the strolling minstrels who played in front of the cafés. Perhaps (horrible thought!) it was even true, as she had heard, that the little boys and girls who disappeared were made into succulent hot patties. At all events it was well to be prudent; so whenever Maurice and Fanny were left at home, they received a parting injunction to be sure they kept the door locked, and did not open it to anybody but Romain.

Romain was the man with the basket,

who had so often excited poor Grandmother's curiosity. He had left Algeria a few days after his master, the Sous-préfet, lingering behind just long enough to give his successor time to make himself comfortable in his old quarters. Romain was a public functionary, too; the Sous-préfecture porter, gardener, coachman, and major-domo, all in one, to say nothing of his being Sylvanire's husband. But that part of his multifarious functions was, on the whole, hardly worth speaking of. Sylvanire had not made up her mind to marry him without a good deal of hesitation, for ever since that unfortunate affair at Bourges she had lost all interest in the other sex. She would not have gone out of her way for the handsomest man in the world, much less for such a puny, insignificant, stuttering, stammering, little fellow as Romain, whose chief attraction was a bilious yellow complexion he had brought back from Senegal, where he had been the governor's gardener after serving some time in the navy. But then his employers were attached to him. He was kind, obliging, and handy at so many trades; he made such beautiful nosegays, invented such amusing games for the children, had ogled her so long and tenderly, that she at last consented; not, however, till she had done her utmost to discourage him, even going the length of telling him the story of the perfidious artillery cadet.

'Have it your own way, Romain,' said she one morning, with a shrug of her great, strong shoulders that may have meant, 'Well, that is an odd notion of yours, to be sure!'

Romain's stuttering gratitude was passionate but slightly inarticulate; vows of eternal devotion mingled strangely with bloodthirsty and vengeful schemes for the indiscriminate annihilation of the whole artillery corps. *Cré cochon!*

Cré cochon! was his favourite expletive. It would out, do what he could to break himself of the habit. *Cré cochon!* expressed all violent emotions indifferently. '*Cré cochon!* Admiral,' was all he said the day Admiral de Genouilly miraculously rescued him from the court-martial. '*Cré cochon!* Madame Lorie!' he ejaculated, when that good lady persuaded her maid to marry him. That sainted pig, in fact, stood for all sorts of eloquent protestations with Romain.

Marriage did not alter the lives of this peculiar couple. The wife kept with her mistress just as usual; the husband kept to his porter's lodge and his garden; so that they were never together. At night Sylvanire had her patient to attend to, and when she went away she continued to sleep upstairs with the children, leaving her husband to bewail his lot in the majestic solitude of the huge bed provided for him in the lodge by a beneficent Government.

They had been living their matrimonial life in this austere fashion some months when the crash came, their master was ruined, and Sylvanire received orders to bring Maurice and Fanny over.

'And pray, what is to become of me?' asked Romain, as he corded up his wife's trunks.

'Do as you please, my good man,' replied Sylvanire; 'I'm going.'

Now what would have pleased Romain was the idea of keeping house with his wife. On her assuring him that their master intended to retain them both in his service when they got to Paris, and that in future they would really live together, he threw up his place without a murmur. The greeting he got from Sylvanire in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, her silent eloquence as she pointed to the misery round them, and showed him the children huddled together amongst the piles of empty boxes—all this drew from him nothing but an unusually vigorous '*Cré cochon!* We've a fine chance of setting up housekeeping here! They don't want coachmen *here*, or gardeners, or major-domos.'

'We shall manage very well with only Sylvanire for the present,' said M. Lorie in his grandest manner; at the same time advising him to try and get some outside work (though, of course, their embarrassments were only temporary). For that matter, as Sylvanire remarked soon after, numbers of

fashionable wives and husbands were separated in Paris. They would see each other every now and then, and love each other all the better for being apart. This, with a broad and amiable grin brightening her face under her white linen head-dress.

'Well, stick to that,' replied Romain, 'and I'll try to find something.' And it is a fact worth mentioning that he did find something very much sooner than his master. By merely going down to the banks of the generous river, and mixing with the tribes of Bohemians whom it supports, he had the choice of quite a number of professions. He could turn bargee, or unload boats, or be a lock-keeper or a wash-house assistant. After mature reflection, he decided in favour of lock-keeping. He accepted a place at the lock just opposite the Mint. It wasn't quite the same thing as a Government situation, but at all events it was, so to speak, next door to one, and on that account pleased him; for, like Lorie, he was an ardent admirer of the Service. The work was hard enough, and left him little leisure. Whenever he could get away he would hasten to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, always taking some little present or other with him in his big basket. Not much—a lock-keeper's perquisites. Sometimes it would be a few damp logs of wood, dropped into the Seine by somebody in breaking up a raft; at other times it would be a pound

or two of apples, or a packet of coffee. He was always supposed to bring these offerings for Sylvanire, but the whole household got the benefit of them. It occasionally happened, too, that a little fried fish found its way into the basket, or a piece of beef; and provisions of that kind certainly cannot have been fished up out of the river.

For some time past, however, Romain's visits had been rarer. He had just been appointed chief lock-keeper at Petit-Port, a village eight or nine miles from Paris. A hundred francs a month, light and firing free, and a cottage on the waterside thrown in, with a strip of garden for flowers and vegetables. Quite a fortune, indeed; yet he would never have accepted it, never have agreed to leave Sylvanire, had she not positively ordered him to do so, telling him that the spring was fast approaching, and that she would run down with the children now and then to spend a few days with him. Why, it would be almost like having a country-house of their own to the poor dears; and some day later on, perhaps (who could say?) they might even settle down cosily together for good. This was all the lock-keeper could get her to promise, though. Half-wild with delightful anticipation he set off for Petit-Port; and since then he had been only able to snatch an hour or two at long intervals for visiting them.

Once Romain was gone, the children

had the strictest orders not to open the door, whoever might knock. But the little Algerians would have stifled behind the dark shutters, for ever closed to hide the misery of their home. They were used to light; they could not live without light. Never thinking harm, with touching simplicity they often opened the window facing the street, not reflecting that a passer-by could easily get in by stepping over the sill, which was level with the ground. But what was there to fear in a peaceful street like this, where the cats lay asleep all day in the sunshine, and the pretty pink feet of the pigeons scratched away for hours and hours together at the cobble-stones? And then you must remember they were only too proud to let people see that they had actually beds, chairs, and a wardrobe in their lodgings, not to speak of the shelves for the hat-boxes and books. Sylvanire had chopped up most of their old furniture for firewood. Nothing remained but a couple of boxes, out of which the future Borda cadet amused himself by constructing quite a small fleet of sailing-boats and rowing-boats. It was the young gentleman's way of preparing himself for the naval school. He owed his ship-building tastes chiefly to Romain, a little to his father, too; for Lorie-Dufresne, fancying he saw signs of a vocation in the lad, at a very tender age got into the way of introducing him as 'Our sailor-boy, ladies and gentle-

men!' to the guests who attended the entertainments at the Sous-préfecture. Or else he would turn to the child with an exulting 'Ah, Maurice, my boy; only think of it. The Borda!'

At first the child was delighted enough by the respectful way in which his playfellows talked of the glorious career he had chosen, or admired the gold-laced cap his mother had bought him. When the matter grew really serious, and he was set to work at mathematics, trigonometry, and other dry sciences for which he had no more taste than for the sea and adventures in general, it was too late to back out, and he did not dare to protest when people called him the sailor. But thenceforward his life was poisoned. The very name of the Borda they were always hurling at him crushed him instantly. He became a wretched, sea-soddened, and spiritless specimen of boyhood; for ever haunted by a prospective naval cadetship, dismayed at the very thought of the head-splitting equations, and diagrams, and geometry he had to master before he should be admitted; and even more dismayed when the dread idea that perhaps, after all, he might be admitted, occurred to him.

He was as fond of ship-building, however, as ever. Nothing pleased him more than for Fanny to ask him to make her a boat. At this particular moment he was

engaged on a sloop, destined to be the finest sloop ever sailed on the pond in the garden of the Luxembourg. He was hard at work by the window, with his little sister by his side waiting to pass him the tools from the window-ledge, and a knot of ragged, shirtless, and braceless urchins watching him outside with ingenuous, open-mouthed admiration.

All at once there came a cry of 'Out of the way, there!' The cobble-stones rattled, the dogs began to bark, the children and the pigeons got out of the way there, and a handsome carriage and pair, with piebald horses and a coachman in a chestnut livery, drew up just in front of the Lories' door. A tall, gaunt old lady, with wicked-looking eyes, overhung by eyebrows as thick as moustaches, stepped out, and darting sour glances at the two children inquired whether this was Madame Ebsen's.

The Borda cadet clenched his fists and teeth tightly, and, though much frightened, boldly answered, 'No, it's on the next floor;' shutting the window as fast as ever he could to keep out the apparition, which he and his little sister took to be one of the evil black women Sylvanire invariably introduced them to in her more gruesome stories.

'She must be one of them,' exclaimed Fanny, with bated breath, marvelling much at the courage of her brother as she spoke.

'I believe so,' replied Maurice, listening

to the sound of their sinister visitor's steps outside on the stairs.

'Didn't you see what a look she gave us?' said Fanny. 'I was almost afraid she would come in at the window.'

'I should like to have seen her try,' rejoined the sailor, in a voice which he did his best to make defiant.

So long as that woman stayed overhead, so long as that carriage stood motionless outside the window, blocking up their view of the street, they remained silently huddled together, hardly venturing to talk or breathe, or knock a nail in. At last they thought they heard her go. To make sure, however, the Borda cadet lifted a corner of the curtain and peeped out. Next instant he dropped it again, for there was the evil woman just outside, looking at him wolfishly through the panes, as though she longed to carry him off. Then the carriage door slammed to, the horses snorted and started on their journey, the shadow they had cast on the window disappeared. The strange visitor was whirled away, and vanished like a troubled dream.

'Thank goodness!' exclaimed little Fanny when she had quite gone. And with that she heaved a deep sigh of relief.

When Lorie went upstairs that evening, he found Madame Ebsen all in a flutter with excitement at having such a fashionable visitor.

'Who was it?' said Lorie. 'I heard something vague about a carriage.'

She proudly handed him a large, imposing-looking card, with this inscription :—

JEANNE AUTHEMAN,
PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER
OF THE LADY EVANGELISTS' MISSION,
PORT-SAUVEUR, PARIS.

'What! Madame Autheman, the banker's wife?' said Lorie.

'Not Madame Autheman herself. She sent some one in her name to ask Lina to translate a collection of prayers and meditations.'

Madame Ebsen pointed to a small gilt-edged book on the table. It was entitled 'Morning Hours,' by Madame ——. Below this you read the following words—

'*A woman lost the world. A woman shall save it.*'

Two translations were wanted, one German and the other English. The price offered was three sous a prayer.

'An odd trade, isn't it?' said Lina, without raising her head from the exercise she was correcting for Fanny.

'Not a bad one,' replied Madame Ebsen, who was not inclined to be transcendental. 'I daresay they make a fair profit out of it.'

With that she began telling her neighbour about this strange person who had been

sent to them, lowering her voice as much as possible in order not to interrupt the lesson.

'Let me see, what was her name now? Mademoiselle . . . Ah, here it is on the card. "Mademoiselle Anne de Beuil, Hotel Autheman." Yes, actually de Beuil in two words. Yet she looked more like a peasant than an aristocrat. Very free and easy, too, I assure you. If you had only heard the questions she put us. First she asked whether we had many visitors, and then what their names were, and then she took to criticising Lina's portrait. Her expression was too cheerful, she thought; much too cheerful.'

'Too cheerful!' indignantly exclaimed Lorie, who had grieved for some time past to see how wan and sad her young face had grown since Grandmother's death.

'Stop a bit,' continued Madame Ebsen, 'that's not nearly all. She told us we were heedless sinners, who neglected our salvation. Why didn't we live with God? said she. But there, I can't remember all she said. It was a regular sermon, texts and all complete. I was only sorry Henriette couldn't hear it. What a pair of preachers they would have made, to be sure!'

Has Mademoiselle Briss left, then?' inquired Lorie, who took no little interest in the crazy creature; doubtless because he knew she regarded him as a highly practical man.

'Yes, she went out as lady companion to Princess Souvorine a week ago. A splendid place, and no children.'

'I suppose she was delighted?'

'Oh, no, she's quite miserable about it, and would give anything to get back to that dreadful place of hers in the Rue du Cherche-Midi. Poor Henriette!'

Madame Ebsen could not get over her visitor's reproaches for some time after that. 'Not live with God, indeed!' she exclaimed. 'That's not true as far as Lina is concerned, at all events. Doesn't she attend all the meetings regularly, and play the organ at the church in the Rue Chauchat? As to me, I've no time for that sort of thing. I'd have liked to see how much praying that Mademoiselle de Beuil would have done if she'd had an old mother and a child to look after. It was work enough to pick up pupils, and then you had to run half over Paris in all weathers to find them. I was so worn out at night that I hadn't strength in me to think, much less pray. Wasn't it piety enough to keep mother happy to the end of her life, and give Lina the good education that is so useful to her now? Ah, my dear child! you will not have to slave as I had when I began to earn my living.'

Stirred by the recollection of her troubles, she told them of the many ill-paid lessons she used to give in the shop-parlours to poor folk hardly better off than herself.

Sometimes, not being able to make even a pitiful franc an hour, she had been glad to exchange German lessons for French. How exacting the parents were, too! One of them actually made her walk all the way from the Arc de l'Etoile to the Bastille, wet or dry, while she drummed languages and irregular verbs into her daughter (a very fat little girl, who had been ordered to take a great deal of exercise). For years she had endured all a poor woman's bitter privations and humiliations. She had worn shabby dresses, and often gone without eating, to save the six sous she needed for her omnibus. Happily she had found that place at Madame de Bourlon's Boarding School at last; a fashionable school, where nearly all the pupils were the daughters of wealthy bankers and merchants. To begin with, there was Léonie Rougier, who had since become Countess d'Arlot; then there was Deborah Becker, the present Baroness Gerspach; and that pretty, eccentric girl Jeanne Châtelus, who was such a fervent Protestant, and always carried a pocket Bible about with her. Jeanne used to preach regular sermons to her school-fellows in the play-ground. They said she was engaged to a young missionary, and that as soon as they married they were going out to Africa to convert the Basutos. And, as a matter of fact, one morning she did leave the school and get married, though not to the missionary. When they next

heard of her, three weeks after, she was Madame Autheman.

Lorie started.

'Oh, yes,' said Madame Ebsen, smiling; 'can you wonder at her preferring the richest banker in Paris to a penniless missionary? Well, she must have had plenty of courage to marry him. He is hideous. The whole of one side of his face is disfigured by a huge wen, which he keeps covered up under a black silk bandage. Skin diseases run in the Autheman family. His mother had something wrong with her hands and arms, which compelled her to wear long gloves day and night. Their cousins, the Beckers, suffer in exactly the same way. But this husband of Jeanne's is more disfigured than any of them. Yes, she must have been desperately anxious to grow rich to have married such a creature as that.'

Lina, who had just finished her lesson, and was sitting in Grandmother's favourite corner, turning over the pages of 'Morning Hours,' here broke in with a gentle protest.

'How do we know that she cared about being rich, mother?' said sweet-voiced Lina. 'May she not have taken him out of pity; may she not have obeyed a generous impulse, some longing for self-sacrifice; may not something have prompted her to devote her life to this poor, stricken fellow-creature? Ah, mother! the world is very cruel and blind!'

She bent her young face as she spoke, a face with pale, downy cheeks, that still bore the marks of sorrow on them. The heavy masses of silvery-fair hair drooped over the book for a moment. Then, turning towards her mother, Lina abruptly added—

'Here's a passage that seems to have been written expressly for young women who are too cheerful—like me, mother. Listen: "*Smiles and gaiety are the signs of a corrupt heart. The heart has no need of them if the peace of God reigns within it.*"'

'Now I come to think of it,' said Madame Ebsen, 'I never saw that little Châtelus laugh. And as she wrote the book, why——'

Lina cut her short, however.

'Here's something much worse;' and, trembling with excitement, she rose and read what followed: '"*Fathers, mothers, husbands, and children do but ensnare the affections. Sooner or later they must die. They who fix their hearts upon them act without forethought.*"'

'How can she write such trash!' exclaimed Madame Ebsen, wrathfully.

'Stop a bit,' continued Lina. 'That's not all either. What do you say to this,' she added, laying particular stress on the next passage: '"*It is a prudent thing to love Christ, and Christ only. Christ does not deceive or die. But He is jealous of our affection, and asks for our whole heart. Let us,*

therefore, make war on all idols. Let us expel all His rivals from our hearts. . . ."'

'Do you hear that, mother! It's a sin for us to love each other! . . . You are to tear me from your heart. . . . Christ is to come between us with those two arms of His they nailed upon the cross! How infamous to write such things! . . . I cannot translate this book. I will not.'

She spoke with such strong emotion; she emphasised her words by a gesture so strangely passionate in a girl of her sweet, calm temper; that the pale-faced little child standing beside her felt a nervous shock go through her, and trembled from head to foot.

'There, there, dear, don't be frightened,' said Eline, taking her on her lap and embracing her with a warmth which made Lorie blush with pleasure. He could not have told you why.

'Come, come, Linette, no need to put yourself in a passion. We should have enough to do if we were to pay attention to all the nonsense we hear and read every day. I must say, though, this lady's prayer is stupid enough. But never mind her, Linette; we can love each other all the same.'

She gave her one of those perfectly trustful looks which you could not have seen in her eyes had not the same blood flowed in her veins as in Lina's.

'But this sort of madness is catching,'

said Eline. 'It might do a great deal of harm to young and weak-minded people.'

'I am inclined to agree with your daughter,' chimed in Lorie; 'although to be sure . . .'

Madame Ebsen shrugged her shoulders. 'Nonsense, nonsense. Who ever reads those books? Why, they are just as harmless as the little English tracts that are given away in the Champ-Elysees, like bills of fare or tailors' price lists.'

So, that matter being settled, they discussed the business side of the question. They did not mind doing it before Lorie. It was not so bad. Three sous a prayer. Yes, they might make quite a large sum of money if they both set to work at the book quickly. No doubt there would be others to translate when that was finished. When people were poor they could not afford to despise any little help of this kind. At all events it would be something towards Lina's wedding trousseau.

Lorie rose and bade Fanny say good-night. The Ebsens' drawing-room, till then the brightest, kindliest place in the world to him, seemed suddenly to have grown sad and cold. He had no share or part in its cheerfulness any longer. He was but a stranger, paying a casual visit. And all this change had come over him merely because worthy Madame Ebsen had unthinkingly treated him as the middle-aged

man he was, and spoken of Lina's wedding-day.

Yes. Soon or late the sweet girl would of course marry. Very soon, perhaps. Well, her husband would have a wife he could be proud of; so clever and brave, so orderly, so sensible, so full of tender charity. Yet somehow the idea of her being married made him sad. It haunted him when he got back to his little room looking on to the garden. The children slept in the next room, and he could hear Fanny telling her nurse all that Mademoiselle Eline had said and done while they were upstairs. Yes, Mademoiselle had a large place in the heart of the little orphan. She would have no time to think of other people's children, though, when she married; she would have children of her own. Poor Lorie! He remembered how her mere presence had gladdened their sad home that day of her first visit. Then to quiet himself he thought it might be well to sort a few letters. Sorting letters was Lorie's pet hobby, his passion, his great stay and comfort in moments of dire affliction. He had a number of green boxes for the purpose, labelled, *Business Letters*, *Family Papers*, *Political*, *Sundry*, and so forth. Over and again he had arranged all his precious papers under their appropriate headings. No new documents ever swelled the collection; and now, when he wanted to indulge

his hobby, he had to content himself by transferring the letters he already had from one paper cover to another. So long as he could shift them from a green cover to a brown one, or from a brown cover back again to a green one, he felt happy.

The first packet his eye lighted on that evening had the word *Valentine* inscribed outside it, like a name on a tombstone. There before him lay all that remained of his dead wife—the letters written to him that year of her illness. Only those; for till that time they had never been parted. They were long letters, and the packet held a good many of them. Some (the oldest) were almost cheerful; filled with loving counsel and gossip about his health and the children's; instructions for Sylvanire and Romain, marked with all the natural anxiety of an absent mother. Next came long lamentations; the fretful outpourings of an invalid. Lastly, there were despairing letters; cries of rage and anguish; bitter complaints of her hard, pitiless destiny; and, curiously mingled with them, still the same womanly anxiety about the household and the children. One had a postscript for Sylvanire, bidding her to be sure and have the mattresses cleaned. Here and there, where the ink had spread, the faded characters seemed to have been once wet with tears. Here and there the letters were too large or shaky; and you saw the hand had

trembled—that the illness had made fell progress. The writing in the last letter of all bore no more resemblance to the first than the poor, worn, withered woman who had greeted him in the vinedresser's room at Amboise had borne to the wife who had set sail only one short year before, ere disease had destroyed the ripe and matronly freshness of a face that the sailors in Cherchell harbour so often turned to look at. Valentine had written this letter while he was away in Paris, trying to save his place. She had sent him from her without a murmur, though she knew that when she did so, Death was at the gate. 'Yes, husband,' ran the message, 'I knew that all was over. I knew we should never meet in life again. But there was no help. For your own sake, for our children's sake, I had to let you go. . . . Oh! how sad it is to have but a few short hours before us, and even for those few hours to be parted! . . . To think that I should die alone, after all, far from my husband and my children!' There were no more complaints after that; nothing but resignation. As in her days of health, towards the very end she had grown calm and patient, cheered him, given him good and sensible advice, bid him take heart of grace, for Government would never part with so valuable a servant, of that she felt quite sure. All that distressed her was the thought of what would become

of the house and the children after her death. There would be so many things to think of; things which a man with an absorbing career might have to leave to strangers. Sylvanire was married, and might not always be with them. Besides, with all her devotion, Sylvanire was but a servant. Gradually, delicately, with careful tact choosing her words, Heaven knows with how much effort —the whole passage was full of erasures, and seemed gasped out rather than written —she hinted at the possibility of his marrying again; not at once—oh, no, not at once —but a little later, in a few years; for he was a young man still. 'But if you do marry again, husband, choose wisely. Give the little ones a mother—a real mother.'

Lorie had read and re-read it till he almost knew it by heart. Never, however, had it impressed him as it did that evening, while he sat in the slumbering house, listening to the quiet step of Someone going to and fro in the apartment overhead, and setting things in order for the night. He heard Someone shut the window and draw the curtains. And still he sat there with misty eyes, reading and re-reading his dead wife's last injunction.

CHAPTER V.

THE HOTEL AUTHEMAN.

THOSE who saw the house of the great bankers ten years ago, during the old lady's lifetime, would hardly recognise it now. It is one of the handsomest and most ancient left in the Marais, and stands at the corner of the Rue Pavée, conspicuous by its *mouchárabie* turret, its high mouldering walls, its irregular windows, and the stone garlands encircling the dormer windows on the roof. At that time, like many another princely mansion in the quarter now used for commerce, it had a wonderfully animated and business-like appearance. All day long the heavy trucks that plied between the Paris house and the refineries at Petit-Port rolled in and out of the great courtyard through the massive doorway. On the steps at the end of the courtyard you might often have seen old Becker (Madame's brother), with a pen behind his ear, counting the leaden chests of bullion as they arrived or left the building. For the Authemans were gold merchants in those days, and supplied gold and silver to all the jewellers in Paris. The old lady—Madame, as they called her—used to sit, with her parrot's perch beside her, watching all the scales and counters in the bank from her point of vantage at the pulpit-

shaped desk in one of the immense rooms with the faded mythological frescoes, on the ground-floor at the back. She affected a bonnet and gloves of particular neatness; and every now and then you might have heard her screaming to some luckless cashier, in harsh, hissing tones that rose above the noise of business and the chink, chink of the precious metals, 'Moses, weigh that gold again; you've ten centigrammes too much in your scales.'

All this has changed since the old lady's death, and the disappearance of the two black marble slabs on either side of the outer door, with the gilt inscriptions—AUTHEMAN'S; FOUNDED IN 1804; and BULLION BOUGHT AND SOLD. The firm confines itself strictly to banking now, has all its ingots coined, and sends the public wealth from one place to another without shutting it up in leaden chests or carting it about on heavy trucks. Madame Jeanne Autheman's carriage wheels alone still rattle over the courtyard stones. The day Lina crossed the threshold of the hotel with her translation she was struck by the silence of the ancient walls. There was a majestic porter at the gate, a porter clad in a respectable black frock-coat, and wearing a white cravat, which gave him a decided resemblance to a Protestant pew opener. As she passed through the porch on the left and ascended the old stone staircase, with its odd corners and

irregularities dimly lighted by slits in the walls such as you see in cathedrals, the bell, which twice loudly announced her coming, awoke so many lonely, hollow echoes, the house seemed so full of religious solemnity, that her heart went thump against her side, and an indefinable emotion oppressed her.

Anne de Beuil, who opened the door, informed her harshly that the Lady President would see her presently.

'Have you brought the prayers?' she went on, with a sour look from under her thick, overhanging eyebrows. 'Give them to me.'

Next moment she vanished through a lofty door, the original paintings on which had been carefully covered with some dark colour more in keeping with the furniture and hangings in the room.

Eline waited some time, seated on a wooden bench, a church bench. A number of other benches were piled up in different places, and at the end of the room stood a harmonium, hidden by a serge wrapper. But the light that filtered through the stained-glass windows was so dim that she could only make out most of the objects in the strange place imperfectly, while she could not make anything at all of the inscriptions on the carved wood panels which once were bright with joyous nymphs and groups of chubby Cupids scattering roses. In the next

room she heard a sound of moans and sobs, with the dismal murmur of a scolding voice. She moved to the end of her bench to get further away from them, and in so doing, to her surprise disturbed some one or something asleep, for a voice at her very elbow exclaimed,' Weigh it again, Moses; weigh it again!'

Just then the door opened, and a ray of light revealed to her a large cage in which sat an ancient parrot with ruffled plumes and a gaunt, bare beak, that fully confirmed all one reads of the tenacity of life shown by these members of the great ornithological family.

'The Lady President will see you now, Mademoiselle,' said Anne de Beuil, crossing the room, accompanied by a long, lank, haggard woman, whose eyes seemed red with weeping, and who wore a travelling-veil. At that instant her eye caught the parrot, too, and very frightened the creature looked at being detected by her. 'So you're there again, are you, you filthy heretic?' exclaimed the gentle Anne, snatching up the cage in a violent temper, and shaking the water, the seed, and the little bit of broken looking-glass inside so savagely as she carried it off, that the wretched bird inside was quite dismayed, and took to shrieking at the top of its cracked old voice, 'Moses! Moses! weigh it again! Moses! weigh it again!'

Eline found the Lady President at her desk, installed in a large and very commercial-looking arm-chair. A striking picture she made there, with her narrow and prominent forehead, her delicate nose, her thin lips, and her black hair smoothed down over the temples.

'Be seated, my child,' said she, in a tone as cold and chilling as her complexion and her declining youth (for she was thirty-five). She wore, not without a touch of coquettish grace, a plain cloth dress of the same sombre hue and pattern as Anne de Beuil's cape, but of richer quality. She was drawn up stiffly, like a clergyman (evidently trying to make the most of her little figure), slowly finishing a letter written in a neat and regular hand. When she had directed and sealed it, she rang the bell and gave it to a servant, with a whole packet of other missives, reading out the addresses as she handed each to him. 'This is for London. This for Geneva. This for Zurich. This for Port-Sauveur.' You might have imagined yourself in some great counting-house on a foreign-mail night.

At last, as though weary of some inward strain, she threw herself back in her hard office-chair, and, crossing her hands over her cape, looked at Eline with a tender smile, while her eyes lighted up, not warmly, but as though they were reflecting the cold, bluish glitter of an iceberg.

'So you are the little prodigy I was expecting, my dear!' she exclaimed, heartily complimenting her upon the cleverness of her translations. No one had ever understood her pamphlets so well, she declared. No one had ever translated them so intelligently or clearly. She hoped she would often do similar work for her. 'Talking of work, my child,' she went on, 'I have an account to settle with you.'

She took up her pen again and made a calculation in a corner of her blotting-pad, as rapidly and correctly as an experienced book-keeper. Six hundred prayers at three sous each made so much. So much was owing for the translation into German, so much more for the translation into English. She wrote out a cheque, handed it to Eline, and told her she could cash it downstairs in the bank. Then, seeing that the girl had risen to go, she bade her sit down again, and fell to talking to her of her mother, whose acquaintance she had made at Mademoiselle de Bourlon's, and of her Grandmother, who had been taken away so suddenly and unexpectedly.

'I trust she came to the Saviour before she died?' said she, with a piercing glance at Eline from her clear, cold eyes.

Lina was too much disconcerted by the question for a moment to reply. Even had the Lady President not seemed so well aware of all that had happened to them,

she was incapable of telling a lie. No, she thought, certainly Grandmother had not come to the Saviour. Either from indifference, or superstitious fear, towards the end she had never spoken of religion; she had clung to the earthly comforts of the life that was so fast slipping away from her. Her death had been almost instantaneous. The minister had found her dead when he arrived—dead and cold, laid out beneath the snowy sheets, all ready and arrayed for the grave. No! she could not honestly say that Grandmother had come to the Saviour before she died.

'Alas, poor soul!' said Madame Authe man, solemnly, rising and clasping her hands, in a burst of oratorical emotion. 'Alas, poor soul! thou shalt never, never see the glory of God! Where art thou, oh thou poor soul? How terrible must be thy suffering! How accursed must they seem who let thee perish unprepared!'

She went on for some time in the same prophetic strain. Eline, however, scarcely heard what she said. At first she felt merely ill at ease; but ere long her heart grew sick and heavy at the thought that Grandmother might be suffering—suffering through her fault; for under her outward calmness this Eline Ebsen had the impressionable and sentimental heart of a Northener.

'Grandmother suffering!' she exclaimed, sobbing like a child as she spoke, till her

soft, fair face was all swollen and distorted, and she almost choked with remorse.

'Hush, hush! my child. Dry your tears,' said Madame Autheman. Drawing nearer to her, and taking her by the hand, she told her that she knew from M. Birk that Eline was a good girl, who fulfilled her Christian duties well enough in the world's eyes. But God, she added, demanded more than eye-service. To please God she should have faith wide and high, and all-protecting, as that tree of life in which the fowls of Heaven made their nests. She especially needed all this, for she lived surrounded by indifference. How should she get faith? There was but one way, said Madame Autheman. She should frequent pious places and the society of those who met together in Christ Jesus.

'Come and see me often,' said she, 'here or at Port-Sauveur. You will always be welcome. . . . Our Paris prayer-meetings are interesting. . . . One of my work-women,' she continued, laying stress on the words, 'she whom you saw go out just now, is shortly to bear public witness to the power of the Gospel. Come and hear her. Perchance her testimony will kindle your zeal. And now go. Time presses.' This with a wave of the hand that might have been a farewell or a benediction. 'Weep no more, my child. I will intercede for you with the all-forgiving Saviour.'

She spoke of Him as though He were

a personal acquaintance of hers who was certain to refuse her nothing.

Eline was so overcome when she left, that she forgot the cheque, and had to return to the broad steps with the three lofty glass doors, half hidden by green blinds, behind which stood the bank counting-house. A counting-house of the usual pattern, with peephole windows, railings, customers going and coming, and piles of chinking gold. It had the same cold and austere look as the room upstairs. The clerks were reserved and prim. The allegorical designs on the walls and ceiling, and the shadowy designs above the doors, once the glory of the Hôtel Autheman, had all been covered over with the same dark coat of paint.

They sent her to a window over which was the word *Port-Sauveur*. As she timidly presented her cheque a man, who was reading something over the cashier's shoulder behind the railings, raised his head to look at her. She saw a poor wan face, with hollow eyes and a swollen cheek, tied up in a black silk bandage which prevented one from seeing anything but a pitiful and unhappy profile. 'It must be Autheman,' thought Eline. 'How ugly he is!' The banker turned just at that moment and smiled drearily. How ugly! that smile of his seemed to reply. All the way home the smile and leper face haunted her. How could any young girl, she wondered, have

consented to marry such a man? Could the stern Protestant she had just left have married him from sheer charity, out of the merciful love women have for God's plague-stricken children? Hardly. She seemed above any weakness of that sort. And yet she had certainly not taken him from any degrading love of money. What could have been her motive, then? To understand the mystery of that strange character, to know the secret of the heart which seemed as silent and desolate as a forsaken place of worship, or a church on a week day, she would have needed to hear the story of this Jeanne Châtelus, ex-pupil of the Pensionnat de Bourlon.

She was born in Lyons, and was the daughter of a silk merchant, of the firm of Châtelus and Treilhard, one of the most important in the city. She lived in the suburb of Brotteaux, beside the magnificent Rhone, which, brightly impetuous as it is when it enters Avignon or Arles, to the music of the church bells and grasshoppers, borrows a dull hue from the fogs and cloudy sky of Lyons without losing any of its impetuosity, and becomes, as it were, a reflection of the Lyonnais character—a compound of coldness and passionate strength of will and melancholy excitement. Jeanne had the same nature as her birthplace, but its peculiarities were intensified by the moral atmosphere in which she was brought up,

Her mother having died young, her father, who was absorbed in his business, was fain to entrust her education to an old aunt—a narrow and bigoted Protestant, wholly given up to petty devotional practices. The child's only amusements were the religious ceremonies she attended at church on Sundays, varied, when it rained (and it often rains in Lyons), by an occasional family service in the large drawing-room (never opened except on such occasions) with the covered-up furniture, which brought together the father, the aunt, the English governess, and the servants. While the aunt drawled out the prayers through her nose, the father listened, with his hand covering his eyes, as if lost in the contemplation of heavenly things. In reality he was thinking of the money market and the fluctuations in the price of silk. Jeanne, who was already of a serious turn, meanwhile waxed gloomy over death, future punishment, and original sin—only lifting her eyes from her Prayer Book now and then to look, through the streaming windows, at the broad, leaden-hued Rhone, whose tossing waves gave it the troubled look of the sea after a storm.

This kind of education told upon Jeanne when she grew to maidenhood. She became puny and nervous, and the doctors prescribed mountain excursions, tours in the Engadine, to Montreux, near Geneva, and the pleasant green places which mirror themselves in the

black and sullen waters of Lake Neufchâtel. When she was eighteen Jeanne also spent a season at Grindelwald, in the Bernese Alps, in a little village inhabited by guides, at the very feet of the Silberhorn, Wetterhorn, and the Jungfrau, whose dazzling crest peeped out between a multitude of snowy peaks and glaciers.

Many people go there to breakfast, or to hire guides and horses. Throughout the day the lonely mountain road is encumbered by a bustling crowd of tourists coming and going with alpenstocks in their hands, forming long caravans which disappear by winding paths, with a slow and measured tread of animals, a heavy tramp of carriers, and a flutter of blue veils waving amongst the hedges. At the end of a hotel garden, however, and well out of the way of the tourists, Aunt Châtelus succeeded in finding a châlet to let in a delightful situation, fronting a fresh-scented pinewood, overhung by eternal snow, on which at moments you saw the exquisitely tender blue and pink of a rainbow. Here no sound broke the stillness but the distant roar of a torrent rushing over stones, with a seething sound of foam; the simple notes of an Alpine horn echoing from rock to rock of the forest; or the dull thunder of an avalanche mingling with the boom of the cannon fired off in the grotto on the road to the neighbouring glacier. Sometimes a wild northern wind blew in the

night, and in the morning you awoke to find, under a glorious sky, a thin coat of delicate snow powdering the ground, covering the abrupt slopes, pines, and meadows as with a transparent veil of lace, till it melted away at noon in a myriad little silver streams which came tumbling down the heights in the shape of tiny waterfalls, or twisted and turned till they lost themselves amongst the foliage and the stones.

All these marvels of the Alpine scenery were thrown away on Jeanne and her aunt, who spent their afternoons on the ground-floor of their châlet, organising prayer-meetings with old English and Genevese devotees of their own sex. Having drawn the curtains and lighted the candles, they would first sing hymns and read prayers; after which each of them would expound a text, with as much subtlety as a professional preacher. There was no lack of preachers, either at the Jungfrau Hotel, or of theological students from Lausanne and Geneva. But these gentlemen were nearly all members of the Alpine Club, and troubled their heads about little but their climbing. Every morning they might be seen defiling up the hillside, with their staves, and ropes, and guides; while every evening, by way of a rest, they played chess, or read the papers; while the younger ones even danced to the strains of a piano and sang comic songs.

'And these men are our ministers!' the

old mummers at the châlet used indignantly to exclaim, shaking their faded locks and starched, disagreeable-looking caps. Ah, if *they* had been commissioned to spread the Gospel, they would have done their work very differently; *their* burning zeal and faith would have fired the world! This dream of woman's apostleship was a constant theme in their discussions. Why should not women be ministers, as well as graduates in arts or doctors? And, indeed, they might nearly all, for that matter, have passed for aged clergymen, with their heated and sallow complexions, and those straight, unwomanly black gowns of theirs.

Jeanne Châtelus drank her fill of all the mysticism round her, but transformed it by her young and ardent nature. And not the least strange of the many strange sights you saw at the hotel prayer-meetings was this young girl of eighteen—with her disturbing beauty, prominent forehead, flat black bands of hair, and her lips tight set from intensity of will and meditation — expounding the Scriptures. The tourists feigned devotion in order to hear her, and the servant at the châlet, a strong Swiss woman who always wore a great muslin bow on the top of her head, was so stirred up by her sermons that she grew quite maudlin, shed tears of repentance in the chocolate, and went about praying and prophesying to herself as she swept the rooms and washed the passages.

Other equally edifying stories of Jeanne's regenerating influence might be quoted. Christian Inebnit, one of the village guides, was one day picked up out of a terrible crevasse into which he had fallen. For ten days he lay dying in horrible torment, filling his hut with howls and blasphemy, despite all the visits and exhortations of the village minister. Jeanne, however, went to see him, seated herself at his bedside, and gently, patiently, reconciled the unhappy man with his Saviour. He fell asleep in death at last as peaceful and unconscious as his own marmot when it settled down under its little leafy covering for the winter.

These victories turned the head of the young Lyonnaise for good and all. She believed she was marked out for the saving of souls, spent her evenings in composing prayers and meditations, grew more and more austere in appearance, spoke habitually as if she were at one of her prayer-meetings, and adorned her conversation with pious texts and adages. *A woman lost the world—a woman shall save it.* The ambitious device which she adopted later on for her letter-paper, and wore inside her bracelets and rings, where other women put tender souvenirs and love tokens, was even then taking shape in her brain. The mission of the Lady Evangelists was there already in the germ, though only in a dim and uncertain form, lost, as it were, in a thousand

confused dreams of her unsettled age, when an accident occurred which decided the colour of her life.

Amongst the frequenters of the meetings was a lady from Geneva, by whom Jeanne was particularly petted. She was the mother of a tall, robust, young theological student, destined for the foreign mission, who, while waiting for his summons to convert the Basutos, occupied his leisure with violent bodily exercise, climbing mountains, riding, drinking Swiss champagne, and jodel-ing as loudly as any Oberland herd. The Genevan lady saw that Mademoiselle Châtelus, whom she knew to be very rich, would be a splendid match for her son, and skilfully paved the way for the marriage by exalting the heroism of the young missionary, who was so ready to give up country and go into exile for Christ's sake. What a joy it would be for her if her poor child, before expatriating himself, could find a truly Christian wife, willing to accompany him on his apostolic mission, to assist, and if necessary, to replace him! What a noble life for a woman! What a glorious work for a Christian!

The idea having once entered Jeanne's head made its way there alone, like those barley-beards which children put up their sleeves, and which climb higher and higher at every movement of the arm.

Chance happening to aid the maternal scheming, the young people soon came to

understand each other; and, little as Mademoiselle Châtelus was affected by the things of this earth, it is probable enough that the graceful figure of the young man, and the vigorous bronzed face which peeped out from under the little white cap of the Genevan collegian, made a favourable impression upon her. Gradually she got into the habit of thinking about him, associated him with her projects, and even often grew anxious about his dangerous climbing excursions. When he did not return at nightfall, she sat up at her window watching a light on the inaccessible heights—one of the small lamps you find in the refuges which the Alpine Club has built upon every peak, and in which tourists are sure of getting a fire and a bed of hard boards. Then this cold maiden would softly say to herself, 'He is there; no harm has come to him,' and fall asleep, very happy, and rather surprised to find that she—who had never known a mother or any passion save the love of God and the hatred of sin—should feel her heart stirred by anything but devotion to Jesus. And even now religious feeling had much to do with her earthly love. When they plighted their troth, alone, on the borders of that Mer de Glace whose waves seem stilled into everlasting rest, no word was spoken which would have been out of place in a church. Their promises and professions were as cold as the wintry wind which blows in the early days

of September, and brings with it, as it were, a bitter foretaste of snow. They vowed that they would be faithful to each other, and spend their lives in spreading that Gospel which was the very word and glory of the true God. And while they spoke, the rocks of the *moraine* shook and rolled beneath their feet, dimming the azure crystals of the glacier with grey dust. It was agreed that he should study for another year before he was ordained, while she should go on working to fit herself for the holy mission that was before her. Meantime they would write to each other every week. Then, when all this was planned, they still stayed on, hand clasped in hand, nestling close together in silence. The young man, who seemed more at his ease than his companion, turned up the collar of his coat when he grew cold. She, however, burnt with apostolic fervour, and her cheeks seemed to reflect the rose tints with which the afterglow of the sunset suffused the massive, snowy peaks of the Jungfrau.

They wrote to each other regularly for a year, mingling love and theology oddly in their letters, so that their correspondence might have been that of some modern Héloïse and Abélard, chastened and chilled by Protestantism. Jeanne being earnestly bent on fulfilling her mission, went to Madame de Bourlon's, in Paris, to study English and geography, and pass the few months

which had to elapse before her marriage. Strange as Jeanne Châtelus appeared to the rich and coquettish Parisian girls about her, she impressed their imaginations by her strong faith, her sibylline manner, and the romance which tinged the story of her betrothal and approaching departure. Besides, she led a life apart from the other girls after class hours, having a little room of her own at the very end of the dormitory, in which two or three of the elder pupils spent their evenings with her. There, and under the plane trees in the playground, Jeanne spread the good tidings, tested the magnetic power of her words and looks, and showed her unconquerable proselytising zeal. She had her disciples, too; amongst them a tall, reddish-haired Jewess, named Deborah Becker, the niece of the widow Autheman. Pretty Deborah's creamy skin had not quite escaped the touch of the disease which was hereditary in the banker's family. At each change of the seasons her face and arms would be covered with unsightly red blotches, which made her look as though she had been dragged through a hedge; and she would be obliged to keep in bed for several days in the infirmary, covered with unguents and starch powder.

Her comrades, who were jealous of her wealth, used to amuse themselves at these times by saying that 'it was the Autheman gold breaking out.' But Jeanne saw in

Deborah's affliction only a providential punishment, and declared the wrath of God weighed heavily upon her race because it persisted in denying Him. She harassed the weak creature with long sermons and interminable theological discussions, giving her no peace even under the shady trees of the widow Autheman's estate at Petit-Port, where her friend often asked her on visits. At last the daughter of Israel was so much shaken in her faith that she was ready to leave her family, abjure everything, and to follow Jeanne and live with her and her husband under a tent, like Paul, in the desert. For even then the Evangelist had learnt to turn hearts from their natural affections, and offer them up, all torn and bleeding, to Jesus.

At this juncture, however, a commercial panic broke out in Lyons, ruining the house of Châtelus and Treilhard, and working a radical change in the young theologian's matrimonial projects. The match was not broken off without a polite apology; but it was broken off all the same, on the pretext that the health of the would-be missionary was not robust enough to stand the long voyage that had been planned out, while he felt that the exceptional apostolic gifts and virtues of Mademoiselle Châtelus would not find a proper scope in the humble little Apenzell cure in which he had determined to settle.

Though she never complained, or betrayed her anguish, it was a terrible blow to Jeanne to be thrown over in this cruel and humiliating fashion. She remained at Madame de Bourlon's two months longer, without a soul but Deborah knowing of the sudden change in her destiny. She expounded the Scriptures as before, and still edified all the elder pupils by her piety ; but this first and last of her love disappointments rankled in her heart, and thenceforward her outward serenity hid an unfathomable pain, a boundless contempt for men and life itself, and an abyss of bitterness. Her mental powers were alone untouched by the calamity. The mystic fire still burnt in her zealot's brain, and her piety increased. But it took a new form, became fierce and pitiless, revelling in texts which drove one to despair, and delighting in Biblical announcements of coming woe and condemnation. Yet with it all she still yearned to regenerate the world. And the thought of the impotence to which her poverty had reduced her, filled her with stifled fury. How could she go out to convert the infidels now, without money, and alone ?

For a moment she thought of joining the Deaconesses in the Rue de Reuilly ; but she knew that the rule and character of the semi-conventual sisterhood would compel her to devote nearly all of her time to visiting the poor and the sick—a vocation which no

longer attracted her; for the idea of tattered humanity was revolting to her, and pity seemed a sin to one who believed that all moral and physical scourges were but blessed trials to draw us nearer God.

One Thursday she was summoned to the parlour, where she found old Madame Autheman in her inevitable white hood and light gloves. She had heard that the match with the missionary had been broken off, and was come to ask Jeanne to accept the hand of her son. The Lyonnaise asked to be allowed a week for reflection. During her visits to Petit-Port she had often noticed this suitor of hers—a taciturn and melancholy man, saddened by the consciousness of his disfigurement, who used to sit at table holding his hand over the black bandage which concealed the hideous swelling on his face, and whose eyes had come to have, as often happens in such cases, a fixed, strained sharpness painful to look upon. The recollection did not shock her. All men had come to be alike to her; all were equally disfigured, afflicted by some deformity apparent or invisible. On the other hand, her suitor's enormous fortune tempted her. She might put it to such pious uses . . . Indeed, she would have accepted the offer without hesitation but for her objection to wedding an unregenerate Jew. An hour's conversation with Autheman sufficed to rid her of

her scruples. The banker was passionately in love, and the marriage took place at the Protestant Church, though all Israel was scandalised, and not at the Synagogue.

As soon as she was married, Jeanne started on her Evangelical work in the very heart of Paris, as if she had been amongst the Kaffirs or the Hottentots. She had an immense fortune at her command, for the Autheman money-bags were always open to her; the lofty chimneys at Petit-Port smoked night and day, the gold melted ceaselessly in the crucibles, and the waggons that rumbled into the courtyard of the Bank were loaded with bullion enough to redeem all the souls of all the sinners in the universe. She held prayer-meetings in her drawing-room in the Rue Pavée, varied by regular services, scantily attended at the outset; and as she went upstairs to bed at night, the Widow Autheman often heard the sound of voices singing hymns to a harmonium accompaniment, and passed the strange, half-witted, hungry-looking women, dressed in threadbare gowns and muddy waterproofs, who formed the dreary and, above all, needy flock of the faithful. The austerity of this life, this renunciation of the world, astonished her—especially in so young and handsome a woman. But her poor son was happy, and she reflected that all this pious mummery might be a safeguard for his happiness. Far from interfering with her daughter-in-law's

mission, therefore, she did her best to help it. Ah! had she but known that one of the earliest and most zealous of Jeanne's proselytes had been her husband, and that he was only waiting till his mother died to make solemn public proclamation of his conversion, and be received into the new faith!

This reception of the Jewish banker at the Oratory was one of the events of the latter days of the Empire. After that, the disfigured, bandaged face of the great gold merchant was seen amongst the benches of the elders and deacons, facing the pulpit, every Sunday. The conversion made Jeanne a power in the reformed church. She became the Madame Guyon of Protestantism, upright in her life, devoted to her work, and respected even by those who had looked upon her enthusiasm as folly. To spread the good tidings to the four ends of Paris she rented several large halls in the popular quarters of the town, in which, on certain days of the week, she herself preached, having at first one solitary acolyte and apostle to assist her—an old maid, a fanatical Calvinist, whom she had met at Madame de Bourlon's, where she filled the post of infirmary nurse and housekeeper, though she was the descendant of a noble Charentais family, ruined by persecution and reduced to its original rustic unimportance.

This Anne de Beuil was religious after the savage, fanatical manner of the hunted

Reformers at the time of the Wars. To them, no doubt, she owed her watchful and suspicious eye, her readiness alike for battle or for martyrdom, her contempt of death and ridicule. Withal a coarse and provincial kind of woman, who knew how to loosen the purse strings where it was expedient, and who, on the days when there was service, did not hesitate to go into the workshops, the laundries, and even into the barracks of Paris, to find hearers for the Gospel.

The hotel in the Rue Pavée changed with the rest. The banking business was continued, but Jeanne had the bullion trade stopped, as it smacked too much of Israel to be agreeable to her. Uncle Becker took himself and his business off, the refineries at Petit-Port (or, rather, at Port-Sauveur) were destroyed, and Evangelical schools and a church built on the spot they had occupied. Before long all that remained of the original household of the Authemans was the old mother's ancient parrot, to which the banker was much attached. Anne de Beuil detested the bird, however, worried it constantly, and hunted it from room to room remorselessly; for it was a last relic of the infidel Authemans, and its harsh voice and curved beak made it the living image of the old Jewess who had once sat beside it, watching while the clerks weighed out the gold.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LOCK.

'ROMAIN! . . . There's Romain!'

Little Fanny's joyful cry, when the train stopped at Ablon station, drew a long line of noisy and excited heads to the carriage windows. It was a bright Easter Monday, and the train was full of Parisians making the first excursion of the season. The little man's queer face and monkey grin accorded so well with the general good humour, that from one end of the train to the other there was a running shout of 'There's Romain!' 'How d'ye do, Romain?' 'Hulloa, Romain!' which, for a brief instant, gave the lock-keeper, as he stood on the platform in the glaring sun, the intoxicating delight of popularity.

'What on earth are they worrying you like that for, my poor fellow?' exclaimed Sylvanire, in consternation, as she jumped out of the carriage with little Fanny in her arms.

'Oh, they're only amusing themselves,' replied Romain. 'But, *cré cochon*! I am enjoying myself more than they are to-day!'

With that, raising himself on tiptoe, he imprinted a resounding kiss on his wife's rosy cheeks, which sent the people at the windows all into fits of laughter, and hurried to the carriage to help Madame Ebsen and

her daughter out. But Lorie was beforehand with him. He assisted the ladies to alight with as much humble deference as though each had been the Empress stepping on to the quay at Cherchell again.

'Where's Maurice?' asked Fanny, who had expected to see him with Romain.

'M. Maurice is at the lock, Mam'selle. I left him behind to help Baraquin to open the gates. . . . This way out, ladies and gentlemen.'

Walking briskly, and looking as though he would have preferred to run, or dance and skip, the lock-keeper hastened to the gate, laden with the cloaks and umbrellas of the whole party; while the train puffed off, and hundreds of mocking voices shouted as a farewell, 'Hulloa, Romain! . . . Romain!'

It was Sylvanire who, seeing the dull and lamentable appearance of the pupil of the Borda as he pored stupidly over his books, had suggested his being sent to the country for a little fresh air. Lorie had consented all the more readily because, with his usual common sense, he had at once seen that the trip would give Maurice an excellent opportunity of learning something of practical navigation. The boy had been at the lock about three weeks, when, taking advantage of this holiday, and having neither lessons nor Government offices to attend to, they had agreed they would run down together to

see him. How proud Romain was to receive a visit from the ex-Sous-préfet and two such ladies! How pleased, too, to entertain his Sylvanire in the home where soon, perhaps, they . . . ! But that was their secret.

An omnibus met the trains at Ablon, which is only a couple of miles distant from Petit-Port; but, to do greater honour to his guests, the lock-keeper had brought his wherry to fetch them—a wide, green wherry, newly painted—and in this they all took their seats. Little Fanny sat at the stern, between Madame Ebsen and Eline; Lorie occupied a place facing them; while Sylvanire, who wore a clean white goffered cap that morning, filled up the bow with her dress—a dress of a peculiar blue which one naturally associates with servants and servitude. Romain leapt on board last, as nimbly as a water-rat, pushed the boat off with his foot, and took the oars. They made a heavy load, and the Seine was sluggish thereabout.

'You'll tire yourself, my good fellow,' said Lorie.

'No fear of that, M. Lorie,' replied the little man; and away he pulled, smiling and grinning in the sunshine, tossing his woolly head back till it almost touched his wife's knees, and, for some mysterious reason, steering towards the very middle of the stream, where the current seemed strongest.

'Petit-Port is on the other bank, I suppose?' at last said M. Lorie.

'Beg your pardon, M. Lorie, it's because of the Chain.'

They did not understand what he meant till they saw him suddenly let go the oars, and fasten the wherry with the end of his boat-hook to the last of a long line of barges which was tugged up the river at that hour every morning. It was delightful travelling, without shocks or fatigue. The throbbing of the engines, and the grinding of the towing chain that was winding round and round on the deck of the tug, only made a soothing, monotonous hum in the distance—a hum that seemed to spread to the two banks of the river with the foam they left behind them in their wake; and the lonely country, the white villas with the long stretches of grass between, and the budding lilacs, flitted past them on either side, while overhead the sky was clear and blue, brightened by the youth of the day and season.

'How pleasant it is!' murmured Fanny, who had her arm under Eline's. The child's words expressed the general feeling. It was very pleasant. For the first time since their misfortune Eline recovered something of her healthy bloom, and smiled again, like an opening flower, at the touch of Nature, the Consoler. Madame Ebsen, like all who have lived and laboured long, enjoyed her respite quietly; and Lorie sat looking at the fair, wilful locks which played about Eline's neck and temples, trying to

make belief it was *his* heart, not his little daughter's, that was nestling so close against the heart of the young girl. But the happiest of them all was Romain, who sat at the bow beside his wife, talking to her in a low tone, and every now and then casting a knowing look at the stern.

'There's Petit-Port,' he presently exclaimed, pointing to a village with red roofs, and to the market gardens that were scattered about on the smooth slopes bordering the southern bank of the Seine beyond Ablon. 'We shall be at the lock in a quarter of an hour.'

An old and stately mansion stood beside the river, with balustered roofs, long rows of grey shutters, thick, well-trimmed hedges, and (opposite the entrance) a semicircular lawn, surrounded by posts and chains. Beyond lay an immense park, stretching far away up the hill—a waving mass of trees, amidst which they saw a time-worn and mossy stone staircase, with a double-curved parapet, once part of some building, doubtless, but isolated now. The foliage was not thick yet, and, through the trees, they got a peep at a massive stone cross which appeared to surmount some huge family mausoleum or a chapel.

'The château of the Authemans,' said Romain, in reply to the mute inquiry in their eyes.

'It must be Port-Sauveur!' exclaimed Eline, abruptly.

'Exactly, Mam'selle. That's what they call the estate in the neighbourhood. Ah, it's a queer place, by all accounts, and so is the village. You might travel through the whole department of Seine-et-Oise, aye, and through all France, I shouldn't wonder, without finding anything like it.'

An inexplicable feeling of uneasiness suddenly came over the young girl, taking all the brightness out of the spring sunshine —all the freshness out of the morning air— all the fragrance out of the violets. The sight of the château had reminded her of her visit to the Rue Pavée, and of what Madame Autheman had said about Grandmother's impenitent death. She could not take her eyes off those closed shutters, or that dark, mysterious park and the funereal cross behind it. What chance had led her hither? Or was it not more than chance, a divine warning? Had not a higher will brought her to this place?

But a bend in the river altered the landscape, and took away its ominous character. A clump of trees intervened. The estate appeared to recede and merged into the hillside. And now they had the lock before them; a line of silvery foam and a dull rumbling, which grew louder and louder as they approached the sluices and the little white jetty near the gates that were slowly opening to let the tug through. Romain showed Sylvanire a tiny box of a

cottage on the towing path. It looked like a die, with its little black dots of windows standing out against the white walls.

'Our home!' he murmured, a tear dimming his eye as he unhooked his boat and rowed to the landing-stage. Maurice, who seemed very busy helping the lock-keeper's man, saw them a long way off and ran towards them, yelling like a red Indian, tossing his cap in the air. The cap, by the way, was a good deal the worse for the sun and water, which had taken all the gilt off the braid; and its wearer was brown and tanned. His nose, too, appeared to have swollen, and, as Romain remarked, he looked every inch a waterman, and was as handy at his work as though he had done nothing but open lock-gates all his life.

'Ah, my boy, we'll soon have to send you off to the Borda!' gaily exclaimed his father, not perceiving what a look of terror came into his face as he was so cruelly reminded of his nautical future. Fortunately they had reached the lodge, a one-story building slightly raised above the ground, as a protection from the floods, and surrounded by a well-kept kitchen garden. Inside were two small iron bedsteads for the lock-keeper and his assistant. In one corner stood the wooden dial, needle, and manipulator belonging to the telegraphic apparatus which connects all the locks on the Seine. Close by was the kitchen, a

goodly sight, with its shining array of brand-new cooking utensils.

'You see, I've been living like a bachelor!' said Romain, adding that he always took his meals at Damour's—at the sign of the 'Famisher'—a cabaret renowned for its vegetable soup and its stewed tench. It was there he had ordered the *déjeûner*. Finally Romain ushered them proudly and mysteriously into a large dark room with closed shutters, facing the kitchen. The light streaming through the window flooded the room, and there was a cry of admiration as it revealed to them a handsome mahogany bedstead, a showy little carpet with red roses all over it, a chest of drawers, and, atop of it, a looking-glass, in which they saw quite a collection of nicnacs and ornaments won at the fairs; to say nothing of the yellow wall-paper, or the cheap pictures and prints with which it was covered. It was quite a surprise altogether, this room of Sylvanire's, which had been entirely furnished with the lock-keeper's savings, without his wife's knowledge. He had meant to keep it for her until——

'There, that'll do,' broke in Sylvanire, fearing he might say too much. She got him out of the room, and left the ladies to arrange their toilette, which had been much disturbed by the Seine breezes.

When they were alone, little Fanny told Madame Ebsen and Eline the secret.

'I know why Romain is so pleased,' said she. 'It's because Sylvanire is going to live with him . . . as soon as we have a new mamma.'

Eline started! 'A new mamma, pet? Why, who told you that?'

'Sylvanire did, this morning, when she was dressing me. But you mustn't talk about it, because it's a great secret.' And she ran off to her brother, who just then called her.

The two women looked at each other. 'Well, he kept it very quiet!' said Madame Ebsen, smiling. Eline took it more seriously though, and waxed very indignant. 'How absurd!' she exclaimed, 'at his age!

She grew quite hot over it, and her hand shook as she put her long jet pin into her hair.

'Oh, Linette, M. Lorie is not so old. Only forty . . . and he doesn't look his age. He's so refined and nice, too.'

Only forty! Eline would have taken him to be much older. His grave manner and pomposity, no doubt, explained the matter. The only thing that troubled her was the fear lest she should be separated from little Fanny, for whom she had a great affection. Of course this wife would take the child away from her. Who could she be? Lorie had never mentioned her. He never went out, either, or had any visitors.

'We must get him to tell us,' said Madame Ebsen. 'We have the whole day before us for the purpose.'

When they joined the rest of the party on the jetty, Romain was explaining the lock system to M. Lorie; showing him how a lever raised and lowered the sluices, and how he used the irons fixed in the masonry, by means of which he descended into the water, in his diving-dress, when the lock-gates needed repairing. Ah, they were a grand invention, these locks! Formerly the poor watermen used to be out of work three months in the year, and this lost time, during which the women and children starved, while the men got drunk, on empty stomachs, at the cabaret, was called, in the riverside slang, *l'Affameur*, or the Famisher, whence the name of the neighbouring auberge. But, since locks had been invented, the water flowed on steadily all the year round, and there was always work for the watermen.

Lorie listened to this dissertation with the grave and knowing air of a Sous-préfet inspecting public works. Eline paid no heed to what Romain said. She was thinking of this child who had been sent to her to fill the void in her life, and satisfy the maternal instinct which was just awakening in her breast. She had all the feelings of a mother for Fanny; a mother's inexhaustible patience and solicitude, a mother's

care. Not only did she teach her, but she attended to the cut of her little frocks, the colour of her hats, and of the ribbons she wore in her hair. She managed it all by herself, for Sylvanire bowed to her good taste, and had ceased to interfere. And, now——

The chain began grating again. The watermen, having finished their meal, went aboard; and, shortly after, the tug, with its panting black and white funnel, its red sides almost grazing the walls of the lock, steamed slowly off, followed by its train of boats. The gates closed, driving back the enormous mass of water; and the tug, chain and all, departed, describing curious zigzags in the river, and growing smaller and smaller, till it seemed no bigger than the tail of a kite, and at last disappeared.

Before they left the jetty, Romain introduced to them Baraquin, his assistant, an old man with the usual tanned and wrinkled face and cunning look of a Seine-et-Oise waterman, who was bent double by rheumatism, and sidled like a crab. The old fellow growled out a few words of welcome which sounded as if they came from the bottom of a vat. They did not waste much of their time on him.

It was a remarkable fact that Romain, who had been a sailor, never touched a drop of wine or spirits. In his youth he had been, as he sometimes boasted, 'the biggest

drunkard in the navy;' but, after getting intoxicated one day, he had assaulted his commanding officer, an offence for which he had narrowly escaped being court-martialled. That day he swore never to drink alcohol again; and, despite the banter, bets, and temptations of his squad, he kept his oath. The very sight of wine almost made him sick now. He delighted in sweet drinks—*café au lait*, chocolate, and orgeat syrup. And fate had given him a companion who was his very opposite; for Baraquin had invariably too much spirituous cargo on board.

'He can't help it,' said the lock-keeper, as he took his guests in to *déjeûner*. It's no fault of the poor old man's. The people up at the Château are to blame. Ever since he *adjured* he has had too much money in his pockets.'

'Adjured! What does that mean?'

'Aye, aye. Every time he goes to the Protestant church and takes the Communion the lady gives him forty francs and a new coat. It's been the ruin of the poor old chap.'

The auberge known by the name of the 'Famisher' may be seen from afar, perched on a terrace, a little way beyond the lock, with green trellis-work arbours at the corners, and open-air games — shooting galleries, swings, and trapezes—between. On entering, their noses were greeted by the plea-

sant odour of the soup which was prepared every day for the Chain. Their hostess, Madame Damour, was laying the cloth for them in a small, but cleanly, private room, with roughcast walls. She looked as cleanly as her house, and had an earnest, and even a hard face, which only relaxed to Romain, whom she called her 'favourite boarder.'

Whilst she went about, preparing the *déjeûner*, the lock-keeper whispered, that no one had been gayer than the Damours once—till they lost their daughter, a fine young girl of about Mademoiselle Eline's age. After that, the husband took to drink to drown his sorrow, and drowned it so effectually, that he was removed to the Vaucluse Lunatic Asylum. No wonder that his wife had no heart for merry making, *cré cochon*!

'What did the poor girl die of?' asked Madame Ebsen, trembling as she gave a furtive glance at her Eline, who sat by her side, in the flower and grace of her nineteen years.

'It is said,' replied Romain, 'that the lady at Petit-Port gave her something . . . to drink that did not agree with her . . . poison.'

Eline stopped him indignantly.

'Nay, I'm only repeating what her mother told me. All I can be sure about is, that she died at the Château, and that

her death is still talked of in the neighbourhood, although several years have past since.'

The hostess came in while they were speaking of her, with a magnificent tench in a large saucepan. Romain had caught it himself in the reserved water which extended for a couple of hundred yards on either side of the lock. The appetising smell of the country dish, the chatter of the lock-keeper, and the appetite which their row on the river had given them, all helped to divert their thoughts from the gloomy tale. The remembrance of it evaporated in the fresh Seine breezes as quickly as the myriad silvery drops of water which came dancing through the air from the stream, covering the glasses, the decanters, and the coarse yellow tablecloth with countless little glittering splashes. The thin Burgundy—which the watermen are in the habit of tendering in payment at the riverside inns—put the climax to the gaiety of the party. They had been put into thorough good humour already by the laughter of the children and the delighted transports of Romain, who was sitting on the window-sill beside his Sylvanire. How happy the worthy little lock-keeper was, to be sure! You would have thought it was his wedding breakfast; and, indeed, it was probably the first breakfast to which he had sat down with his wife since they were married. But he did not allow his happiness to make him forgetful of the

company. He superintended every detail of the feast, and was constantly running in and out of the kitchen in search of something to add to his guests' comfort. Nay, he even insisted on making coffee himself for his old master in the Algerian way, which he was so fond of, leaving the grounds at the bottom of the cup. When he had finished, he brought it in triumphantly on a tray, and put it down with a bang on what appeared to be a long sideboard. As he did so, he heard a jangling sound under the table-cover, and exclaimed, 'Hulloa, a piano!'

It was an old, old harpsichord, bought at some sale in one of the ancient châteaux you may still meet along this bank of the Seine. After having accompanied many a *gavotte* and stately minuet, the antique instrument now served to amuse Parisian holiday-makers in a common wine shop, and was wearing out its well-nigh silent strings to the tune of 'L'Amant d'Amanda' and 'La Fille de l'Emballeur.' At the touch of Eline's delicate fingers, however, it seemed for a moment to recover its melancholy and tinkling voice, which harmonised so well with the yellow ivory of the keys; and when the young girl, who had not played once since her bereavement, broke into the refrain of the old national song—

Denmark, thy fair fields—

you might have fancied Grandmother herself

was there; that her cracked and quavering voice was evoking the far-away green pastures, and the waving corn, and all the broad sunlit landscapes of her native country.

Then Eline began playing Mozart—one of those airs of his which sound like the warblings of a caged bird answered by the shepherdesses on the river banks, and the linnets hopping about among the rushes. When the first sonata was ended, she began another, and then another, yielding more and more, as she went on, to the charm of the ancient instrument. On turning round at last, she found herself alone with Lorie. The rest of the party had gone to the waterside; Romain and Sylvanire to amuse the children, and Madame Ebsen to weep there undisturbed. Lorie still lingered, listening, and far more deeply moved than became any one in the Service. She looked so pretty, you see, as she sat there, with her eyes sparkling responsive to the music, and her slim, graceful fingers rambling over the keys. Gladly would he have prolonged the precious moment, aye, have stood there for ever, watching her . . .

Suddenly a child's cry, a resounding cry of terror, disturbed the vapoury stillness that surrounded them.

'It's Fanny!' exclaimed Eline, turning pale, and rushing to the window. But by this time the cry had died away, and was succeeded by peals of laughter. Leaning out

of the window to see what it all meant, Lorie saw Romain in his diver's dress getting ready to enter the water.

'Oh, what a fright I had!' said Eline.

The colour returned to her cheeks, and she once more breathed freely as she leaned for support against the railings of the little balcony; a halo of light encircled her, and she appeared to blush.

'How good you are to the child!' murmured Lorie.

'Is it strange? I love her as though she were my own. The bare thought of losing her makes me sad.'

He took alarm, fancying she was referring to the matrimonial plans of which Madame Ebsen had already spoken to him. Timidly, as one who questions and yet dreads the answer, he said, 'Lose her? Why lose her?'

She paused for a moment, looking away into the distance.

'Are you not going to bring her home another mother soon?' she replied at last.

'Who can have told you that? I never dreamt of such a thing,' he began. But it was impossible to resist those clear eyes looking into his. Yes; he had to confess now and then some such dream would flit across his mind. It was so sad to live alone —never to be able to share the joy and sorrow of the day with any one. . . . Yes, home was wretched enough when no woman

brightened it. . . . Sylvanire would leave him some day or other, he supposed, and after all, she could never be a mother to his children. For his own part, too, he owned he knew little about managing a household, although he was a born organiser, and should not hesitate a moment to undertake the government of all the province of Algiers.

He spoke quite simply, looking slightly embarrassed, with a kind and ingenuous smile lighting up his face. Eline liked him far better as he stood there so helpless than when he put on the pompous airs he affected on grand occasions.

'Now you know why I have had thoughts of remarrying,' said Lorie. 'Believe me, though, I have kept them locked up in my heart and have told no one of them. How can you have found out . . . ?'

Eline interrupted him.

'I hope this woman is good and kind.'

'Good and kind. . . . Sweetness itself,' replied Lorie, trembling with emotion.

'Are you sure she will love your children?'

'She loves them already,' he replied; and then she understood it all, and stopped short, covered with confusion.

He took her by the hand and began to speak in a low voice, hardly knowing what he said. But Eline knew that only love could have inspired those troubled accents;

and whilst the tender promises and protestations rushed to her lover's lips, she stood there as in a dream, looking away towards the horizon, and seeing, as in a vision, her life spread out calm and peaceful before her like the Seine landscape, with its fields and furrows clearly defined, and its young springing corn darkened by the passing clouds, or sunlit, as the sky's whim willed it. Youth loves not such calm scenes. It longs for difficulties to conquer; sighs for Red Riding Hood forests and fairy towers. . . . Yet, after all, this marriage offered her would not clash with any of her affections. She would be with Fanny and need not leave her mother.

'Leave her? Never, I promise you, Eline.'

'Let it be as you wish, then,' said Eline. 'I will be the mother of your children.'

Without knowing exactly how it had come about, a minute had united them for all their lives. Madame Ebsen guessed the truth at once when she joined them on the balcony, and saw them standing hand in hand, looking down together at their children.

CHAPTER VII.

PORT SALVATION.

Of all the pretty and sunny villages scattered here and there on the left bank of the Seine between Paris and Corbeil—Orangis, Ris, Athis-Mons, and the rest—Petit-Port is the only one which boasts a history. At the end of the sixteenth century it was, like Ablon and Charenton, an important Calvinist stronghold, and one of the meeting-places of the Parisian Protestants authorised by the Edict of Nantes. Sully, the Rohans, and the noblest followers of the Reformed faith, have gathered round the pulpit in the little church at Petit-Port. The magnificent carriages of the Princess of Orange once rattled along beneath the elms of the Pavé du Roi. Famous theologians preached there. Notable baptisms, and marriages, and conversions once made its name famous. But its glory was of short duration. On the revocation of the Edict, the Calvinists of Petit-Port were dispersed, and their church was rased to the ground. In 1832, when Samuel Autheman went down to build his gold refinery, he found only an obscure market gardening village, with nothing about it that reminded one of the history lying in the dusty pigeon-holes of the Archives but the name given to an abandoned quarry in the neighbourhood.

They called it the 'Preaching Place.' The gold merchant built his workshops on the very spot once occupied by the church, at the highest point of the superb estate which he had bought. He was a very wealthy man even then. The estate had a history too. It had belonged to Gabrielle d'Estrées. But of this the only trace remaining was an old stone staircase, rusted by many alternate suns and storms, its double balustrade dark with clustering Virginian creeper and ivy. What a bright, vanished throng of gay nobles and lovely dames, clad in rich velvet and sheeny satin, was evoked by that ancient staircase! Many of the trees in the park had doubtless known the favourite. But trees do not speak as stones do. They have convenient memories, and forget as they change their leaves each recurring year. All we know of the old Château is that it once stood on the height looking down on the estate, and that the poor folk lived by the waterside in those days, on the land now occupied by the restored and enlarged modern mansion of the Authemans.

A few years after they had taken possession, like many other people living on the banks of the river between Paris and Corbeil they were rudely disturbed by the construction of the Orleans Railway. The line ran right through the Autheman estate, just in front of the grand entrance, cutting it

off from the baskets of flowers which adorned the garden, and destroying two of the four magnificent pawlonias on the lawn. All day long the trains rushed backwards and forwards under the light rustic bridges which connected the two divided fragments of the park, with a ceaseless clatter of iron, with interminable puffing and smoking. And as the passengers dashed by on their journeys north and south, they caught fleeting visions through the windows of glittering conservatories and red-brick stables, and two narrow kitchen-gardens running along the line, like the odd little gardens you see at stations, and a terrace with close-clipped orange-trees, on which they sometimes saw the Authemans taking the air in their American rocking-chairs.

The Calvinistic memories that clung about the place and seemed to single it out for her mission from all others, kept Jeanne Autheman at Petit-Port when her mother-in-law's death left her sole mistress of her husband and his fortune. She transformed the country-house into a second edition of the house in town, re-built the Protestant church, and had schools run up for the boys and girls in the village. Her uncle Becker and the refinery hands went away to the works at Romainville; and ere long there remained at Petit-Port only the peasants, the market-gardeners, the vine-dressers, and a few tradespeople. Aided by Anne de Beuil, she

began to proselytise amongst the tradespeople. The old maid went from door to door, promising the custom of the Château to all who attended services in the new church or sent their children to the Evangelical free schools. Attached to the schools were workshops, in which the pupils who had given satisfaction during their studies found places suited to their wants and tastes awaiting them.

It would have taken a very firm faith to resist such tempting arguments, and our French peasants are not shining religious lights, most of them. A few of the children came over first. Then their parents gradually got into the way of accompanying them to the Sunday meetings. Madame Autheman soon found it necessary to engage a minister—an old and timid man from Corbeil—to attend to the marriages, the funerals, and minor duties of the mission. The entire control of all pertaining to the church and schools, however, she kept in her own hands, and the old man remained a subordinate till he died a few years after. She had a great deal of difficulty in replacing him, despite her wealth and her reputation among the members and elders of the Paris Consistory. One minister after another came down to Petit-Port, and went away again, weary of being a mere reading machine and sexton. But at last she discovered the person she wanted. He was a

Scandinavian, named Birk, who knew just enough French to be able to get through the services, had no scruples, and was very mercenary.

Jeanne preached and interpreted the verses herself, not a little to the amazement of the villagers, who could hardly believe their eyes when they saw the lady from the Château in the pulpit. But they grew used to it. Why not? She was a capital preacher, after all, and could talk quite as long without stopping as the curé. Then the church made a great impression on them. It was much larger than their own, and the high bare walls looked so austere. The great banker's position and wealth, too, overawed them. They went away bewildered but admiring, spreading strange reports abroad of how young Madame Autheman 'said mass.' After service the Châtelaine usually stayed some time in the vestry, to receive any one who might come to her for advice. To all her visitors she had something practical to say. She generally managed to draw them out about their own affairs; and what counsel she did give was given in plain common-sense language, as different as possible from the mystical phraseology of the pulpit.

Next she had it made known to the villagers that on the day they took the sacrament, prizes, in money and clothing, would be distributed to all who embraced

the Reformed religion. The first convert was the postman. Then came the local stonebreaker and his wife, whose admission to the fold was celebrated with great pomp. Their appearance in their warm new cloth and woollen clothes, with money jingling in their pockets and the assurance of more from the Château sustaining them, converted numbers of people in the village.

Only two persons at Petit-Port, the curé and the Sister, had the means of opposing the Protestant crusade. The curé (good, saintly man) found it hard enough to live on his slender income, though it was increased occasionally by what his servant could get without scandal at the Ablon inns for the fish he caught in the river. Moreover, he had always been accustomed to look up to the rich and influential inhabitants of the village. The Authemans had not much to fear from him. On Sundays, to be sure, he would now and then indulge in a veiled allusion to what was going on. He sent several reports to his bishop at Versailles. But, do what he could, his church emptied like a cracked vase; and his Catechism class grew smaller year by year, much to the delight of the few urchins who still attended it—chiefly with a view to playing hide and seek amongst the long rows of unoccupied chairs which filled the building.

Like all women under the influence of passion, Sister Octavie, the directress of the girls' school, was a fiercer antagonist. She took up her stand resolutely as the opponent of the Château, and quite put the poor priest to the blush by her energy. Having plenty of leisure time now, she would run from one end of the village to another, with her cap flapping ominously and her chaplet rattling defiance of the foe. Her old pupils often found her waiting for them outside the Evangelical schools. 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you good-for-nothing?' was her usual greeting to them. She bundled their mothers off to the washing-tubs, sent their fathers about their business in the fields, and exhausted herself in invocations to God, the Virgin, and the Saints in heaven. But heaven is only sky to the peasant—a place which sends him rain and sunshine for his crops. Her remonstrances were met by hypocritical sighs, bland blinkings of the eye, and hollow regrets. 'Aye, aye, Sister, I know; things would be much better if you had your way.' But it all meant nothing.

Sometimes she and Anne de Beuil met, and there was a scene. The two women embodied their respective creeds admirably. One, gaunt and sallow, was, despite her age, the image of rebellion and persecution. The Sister was as buxom as the Protestant was thin. Her pleasant face, fat cheeks, and

dimpled hands, no less than the comfortable set of her snowy muslin cap, plainly marked her as one accustomed to the favour of the wealthy. In this case, however, the odds were all against her, for she was waging war with the Château.

Not content with heaping ridicule upon Madame Autheman and her preaching, in her zeal Sister Octavie accused her of sequestrating children, and resorting to all kinds of cruelty to induce them to abjure their faith. She even charged her with using unholy drugs and spells to effect her purpose; and the mysterious death of a servant girl called Félicie Damour gave a shadow of probability to her stories. An inquiry was instituted which led to Sister Octavie's removal to another post; and, no one being appointed to replace her, the curé was left alone to preach to empty benches. He avoided an open rupture with the Authemans, however, who treated him politely and sent him presents of game in the shooting season. 'They are too powerful for us,' said his bishop to him one day. 'We must bide our time, and manœuvre.' Having thus been freed from responsibility by his superior, the good curé washed his hands of the whole matter and went a-fishing.

The village had a curious appearance in those days. Troops of children wearing black alpaca blouses came and went

amongst the stiff uniform rows of red-roofed houses which old Autheman had built for his workmen, and the straight, formal elm-avenues planted later by his daughter-in-law. Sometimes they were under the care of a long-coated master; sometimes they were escorted by two young girls in dresses with capes, like Anne de Beuil's. The Château servants all wore black liveries; and all had the two bright metal letters, P.S., stitched on their coat-collars. You would have taken it for some Moravian settlement; only the Moravians we know to be sincere, whereas the Petit-Port peasants were and are abominable hypocrites. They knew that their pious grimaces would not pass unrewarded, and that it was good policy on their part to affect to groan and bend beneath the weight of the original Sin; to go about with a mask of contrition; and to so embellish their rustic jargon at every turn with biblical quotations, that at last the very atmosphere of the neighbourhood seemed saturated with holy writ.

Texts thrust themselves upon you on the pillars of the church, on the school walls, and in the shops of the Château tradespeople. At the butcher's you were entreated to 'Die to earth if you would live for ever.' And the grocer greeted you with an exhortation to 'Fix your thoughts on high,' possibly meaning on the jars of cherry-brandy ranged along the shelves nearest the roof. But the

peasants were far too cunning to obey this precept with the eagle eye of Anne de Beuil upon them. They did their drinking and the rest at Athis or at Damour's, the host of the 'Famisher.' Ah! they were true Seine-et-Oise peasants—liars, thieves, rakes, and cowards, who hid away their vices only to enjoy them the more in secret.

There was one marked difference between the village of Petit-Port, now so curiously risen from its ashes after three centuries of oblivion, and the other Protestant endowments near Paris. Unlike the schools at Versailles and Jouy-en-Josas, or the agricultural settlements at Essonne and Plessy-Mornay, which are supported by contributions from the various Protestant communities of France, England, and America, it depended entirely on the bounty of the Authemans, who had made it their absolute property and creature, so to speak, and did what they liked with it uncontrolled.

Jeanne Autheman was the High Priest and moving spirit of the place, who directed the arm and action of Anne de Beuil. Although she spent quite eight months of the year at Petit-Port, very little was seen of her there. The voluminous correspondence of the Lady Evangelists' Mission (or 'The Mission' as they themselves call it) and the catechising of converts, occupied most of her mornings. In the afternoon she buried herself in 'The Retreat,' a lonely and myste-

rious châlet standing in the middle of the park. On Sundays she devoted herself entirely to her schools and church—a tomb-like church, solemn and white, surmounted by a massive cross, which seems to sadden and crush the estate below it. A cross and church in keeping with the monastic severity of the place; the neat and well kept but deserted avenues; the trim gravel walk and steps on which from time to time you got a glimpse of a vanishing black gown; in keeping with the whole great, melancholy, pious-looking mansion and its closed shutters, from behind which, in the long, drowsy, silent summer afternoons sometimes came faint echoes of hymns and the distant sound of an organ.

Towards evening the house grew a trifle brighter. The lodge gates were thrown wide open, carriage wheels creaked and grated over the gravel, and a worn-out old collie dog fell to barking welcome home to his master Autheman, who preferred losing an hour in driving down from Paris in his brougham, to exhibiting his unhappy face to the curious gaze of the crowd which, about five o'clock, always encumbers the terminus of a suburban railway. Then for a moment all would be bustle and excitement. Doors banged, sharp, short words were interchanged in an undertone. Grooms whistled and pails clattered in the stables, as the horses were watered. And with that the

household relapsed into mournful silence, only broken occasionally by the snorting and fuming of the passing trains.

One fresh and glorious morning in the month of May the Château had an air of unwonted animation. It had hailed heavily in the night, during a terrible storm which had strewn the ground with young leaves and flowers. The steps were covered with broken glass from the conservatories, and the gardeners' rakes and barrows rattled up and down, clearing away the shattered window panes and young branches.

Autheman, who was always one of the first to get up at the Château and to arrive at the bank, was feverishly pacing to and fro on the terrace. He seemed much agitated—perhaps by the sight of the havoc wrought amongst his beautiful groves and hothouse plants. Each time he reached the steps at the end of the terrace he stopped, turned back mechanically, and cast an upward glance at the closed shutters of his wife's room. Whenever a servant approached, he asked whether her mistress was up yet; and, on being answered in the negative, started off again, nervously rubbing and worrying the bandage which covered half of his poor, disfigured face, with his gloved hand; a common trick with him when he was excited. He might have been a ghost flitting aimlessly about that

clear, sunny morning. His eyes had the fixed, hungry look which Eline Ebsen had seen in them that day when he first appeared behind the bank railings. The bitter smile distorting his lip seemed to ask the mute, mournful question, 'Am I not hideous to look upon?'

Yes; hideous! From his youth up this had been the rich man's great despair and torture. Marriage, and the possession of the woman he loved, had cured him for a time. Reassured by the pressure of his young wife's arm, he had summoned up courage enough to go into society. You met him at church, at the Bourse, and at the meetings of the Consistory, of which he soon came to be one of the most active members. He had even been appointed Mayor of Petit-Port. Suddenly, however, returning to his old state of hypochondria, he had withdrawn from his post, shut himself up in his Château, and hidden himself behind the blue curtains at the bank. Yet to all appearance nothing had occurred to alter him. The prosperity of the bank was no less; the harmony that reigned in the household was as edifying as ever. He was still in love with his wife, still ready to satisfy the costly caprices of the mission. She was always kind and affectionate, never failed to give him her smooth white forehead to kiss when he left her or came home; never omitted to take an interest in the day's

business, like the true Lyonnaise that she was, a mixture of the practical and the mystic. She told him all about her own affairs—what was to be the text of her next sermon, how many souls saved during the week had been entered on the credit side of the spiritual ledger which she posted every evening. Only one secret lay like a gulf between them. The husband's absent answers, the imploring look with which the poor wretch vainly tried to move his wife's smiling indifference, now and then revealed that secret. Strange though the omission seemed in one so zealous, Jeanne refrained from asking why he had ceased to take any part in the service and prayer-meetings, and why, even on the three great annual communion days, he was seen no longer sitting on the benches of the elders. Nay, she even appeared to shrink from all explanations on the subject. With the instinctive adroitness of a woman and a priest, she avoided it; and he, being proud, had said nothing, fearing to cast a gloom over the fair face which was the light of his life.

But as Autheman paced to and fro that morning, or leant against the balustrade of the stone staircase, watching the trains, he had determined to end it all and tell her what had, for three years past, been in his heart.

The seven o'clock express! A distant rumbling, a shaking of the ground, and the

panting monster dashed past, scattering the flowers and foliage with which the storm had strewn the iron rails. In front of the pawlonias they had formed quite a floral carpet; and, as he stood there looking down, the banker thought, as in his boyhood he had often thought, how sweet it would be to lie down to rest upon that line, and so be rid for ever of his horrible and incurable disfigurement. The temptation was for a moment irresistible. A giddiness seized him, and he fell forward against the balustrade. But the train rushed by like a whirlwind, and vanished with a shriek and a moan. The brass on the engine flashed; the little windows all seemed to blend into one. The sparks, and the dust, and the dancing leaves clouded the air for a moment and disappeared in the wake of the express. Then a sudden stupor fell upon everything. Life and nature seemed to stand still; and where the flowers had just before lain broadcast, nothing was seen but the dark, glistening iron rails.

'Madame can see Monsieur now in the study.'

'I shall be there directly,' said Autheman, speaking with the voice of a man rudely awakened from the anguish of a nightmare.

Jeanne was at breakfast in an old-fashioned little room on the ground-floor, talking to Anne de Beuil. On the edge of a

table beside her stood a bowl of cold milk and a pile of books and papers.

'Stay,' said she, in a rapid whisper, as her assistant rose to go when her husband entered.

She looked Autheman full in the face with her clear, cold eyes, and said simply,

'Good morning, Charles. What a dreadful storm we had in the night!'

'Aye, dreadful indeed,' replied Autheman, sadly; 'I was afraid you would be nervous, so I knocked at your door in the night, but it was locked.' . . . And in a low voice he added, 'As usual.'

She seemed not to have heard the remark, for, dipping her bread into the milk, she went on with the conversation which her husband had interrupted.

'You are sure of that, Anne?'

'Unless Birk is lying,' replied Anne de Beuil, roughly. 'But the marriage cannot take place for three months, as they are in mourning.'

'In three months? Well, we shall save her yet.'

This conversation, and the presence of a third person, were too much for Autheman's patience.

'I really beg your pardon, my dear,' explained Jeanne, 'we were talking of Eline Ebsen; you know the child I mean. We would fain snatch her soul from the burning.'

Apparently he did not feel the slightest interest in Eline Ebsen.

'Jeanne!' said he, in reply, mutely imploring pity with his eyes.

But he saw at once that she had made up her mind not to understand him.

'Be it so!' he exclaimed, abruptly. 'Good-bye.'

With a touch of her delicate hand, however, she stopped him short as he was turning to go.

'One moment, dear. I want you to do something for me in town. . . . Is Watson ready, Anne?'

'She still kicks against the pricks,' answered Anne de Beuil; 'but she will be ready.'

On this Jeanne took out a sheet of note paper headed with the name of the mission, and wrote a short note, which she read out when she had finished.

'My dear Child,' it ran. 'Mrs Watson is to bear public witness to the power of the Gospel next Wednesday. We hope to have an interesting meeting on that occasion at Branch B, 59 Avenue des Ternes. I trust you will be able to join us.

'Your affectionate sister in Christ.'

When she had signed and sealed the letter, she handed it to her husband, telling him to be sure to send it round that morning. This was not all she wanted him to do, though. There were proofs to be taken to

the printer's; the tuner had to be sent for to tune the Branch B harmonium; three hundred Bibles were wanted, and three hundred 'Daily Breads,' and——that was all, she thought, for that morning.

He stopped again on the threshold, regretting his lost opportunity, and made as though he would have spoken. But the words failed him, and he strode away at last, banging the doors behind him, furious.

'What's the matter with him?' said Anne de Beuil when he had gone.

Jeanne merely shrugged her shoulders—'Oh, nothing. . . . By the way, you had better tell Jégu to put a new lock on my door; the old one seems rather loose.'

'I suppose it was the storm loosened it,' replied Anne de Beuil. 'It shook the whole house.' And the two women looked at each other for an instant, without a muscle stirring on either of their cold, impassive faces.

CHAPTER VIII.

WATSON BEARS WITNESS.

At nightfall Madame Ebsen and her daughter entered a humble court in the Avenue des Ternes. It was dimly lighted by the reddish glow of what appeared to be the lamp of a police station, though you read on it the words *Evangelical*

Meeting House. Outside, on the threshold of two green-baize-covered swinging doors, stood a man distributing little books, pamphlets, and hymns, together with programmes for that evening's proceedings, which had begun when they arrived.

It was a vast and lofty room, which had once been a workshop, and had not long since been transformed into a meeting house. On the walls, under the paint, in the places on which the garish lamplight fell, you saw the black traces of the smithy chimneys, and the holes into which the tool rack had once been fixed. Inside this room was the most incongruous congregation imaginable, scattered here and there on forty or fifty long benches—respectably dressed old ladies; foreigners; several clerks from Autheman's bank; a few idlers attracted to the place by curiosity; half-a-dozen vagabonds who had thought it more economical to sleep there than at the café; some working men in blouses; some street sweepers (the most Lutheran corporation in Paris); four or five soldiers, with close-cropped hair and very red ears; and, lastly, the hired riffraff and the beggars, who were paid by the hour to attend — dull, drunken, brutish-looking creatures, amongst whom was one wretched woman, surrounded by a swarm of ragged children munching crusts of bread.

Madame Autheman, cold and majestic as usual, occupied a large arm-chair in the

middle of the platform, close to the gaunt figure of Anne de Beuil, who was solemnly beating time while the congregation sang a hymn. Behind them both was ranged a double row of Evangelical capes and alpaca blouses from the Port-Sauveur schools, with moving spots of white in relief against the dark background wherever there were hymn-books.

Eline, who had taken a seat beside her mother at the end of the hall, opened the dainty programme she had had given her, and read what follows :—

MEETING OF THE LADY EVANGELISTS.

Meeting House B, 59 *Avenue des Ternes.*

1. Hymn IV.

'The precious blood of Jesus
Has washed my sins away.'

2. Address by Mme. J. AUTHEMAN.

'Spiritual sloth.'

3. Testimony of young NICOLAS, of the Port-Sauveur Schools.

4. Testimony of WATSON, of Cardiff.

'A night of tears.'

5. Hymn XI.

'Sinners, filled with guilty fears,
Behold His wrath prevailing.'

She had hardly reached the end of this jargon, when they were both asked to move up to the front bench. Madame

Ebsen's vanity was not a little tickled by the invitation. The good soul was delighted at the idea of being with the old ladies whose carriages she had seen drawn up outside the door, behind the lady president's and the school omnibuses from Port-Sauveur. She had a weakness for titles and fortune; and, as she pulled her silk mantle round her shoulders, she positively beamed on her neighbours like a schoolmistress on breaking-up day. Eline, however, pressed as closely to her as possible, to avoid notice, for it disconcerted her to be sitting there under the very eye of the lady president.

The singing came to an end, the hymn-books closed automatically, and, as usually happens when a congregation settles itself down to listen for a few moments, there was much coughing and scraping of feet. At last Madame Autheman stepped forward to the edge of the platform. Her black hair was neatly plaited, and she wore a well-made bonnet (for St. Paul expressly forbids women to preach or prophesy with their heads uncovered). She spoke of the decline of faith and the sluggishness of modern Christianity. Nay, were there any Christians left among the degenerate men and women of the present day? No one suffered, or fought, or died for Christ now. A few daily prayers said with the lips, not the heart—a little feeble devotion—a mere matter of custom—this was the easy sacrifice our

selfish affection offered nowadays to the Lord.

Eline recognised that ice-cold, penetrating voice at once, and it stirred her to the very depths of her being. 'She is addressing me!' she thought, and she regretted that she had come, knowing, as she did, how powerful an influence that woman had over her.

. . . 'No,' continued the preacher, 'Jesus will have none of this lip service. He cares not for unwilling Christianity. What He requires of Christians is that they should forsake all greatness, all comfort, all earthly affections, and follow Him.'

Out in the street you heard the roll of the carriages, mingled with the tinkling of omnibus bells, the moaning of tramway horns, and the strains of the music at a low ball-room in the alley. But these Babel noises did not reach the ears of the Evangelist, or, if they did, disturbed her no more than the noise made by the poor little children nibbling their crusts at the end of the room, or the snoring of the heedless sinners who had fallen asleep. Calm and erect, while with one hand she wrapped her cape round her, and with the other held a half opened hymn-book, she went on exhorting her hearers to free themselves from all earthly ties and affections; winding up by a Scripture quotation, 'Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or

parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.'

It was quite refreshing to hear the singing and the organ again after the long, disheartening discourse, which seemed to have filled the very air with dreariness. One of the soldiers rose and left the hall; he had had enough of it. Besides, it was far too hot under that glass roof. 'They ought really to turn the gas down,' whispered Madame Ebsen. 'Yes, yes,' irritably replied Lina, who had not understood her mother's remark; 'it's in the Bible.'

Suddenly a shrill, vulgar boy's voice was heard on the platform, speaking with the objectionable intonation affected by the ticket touts who prowl about the Paris theatres. It was young Nicolas, of Port-Sauveur. He seemed about fifteen, had hollow cheeks, an unhealthy complexion, flat, oily hair, and a long blouse. Every word he uttered was emphasised by a blackguardly gesture.

'Glory! glory! The blood of Jesus hath washed me clean! I was in the service of Satan. My soul was foul and black, and steeped in iniquity; yea, I shudder at the enormity of my sins.'

Here he halted for a moment to take breath, and it looked as though he were

about to entertain the congregation with a full and particular list of all the sins he shuddered at. Happily, however, he thought better of it. Had he not, his hearers might have had some strange things told them, for before he entered the schools at Port-Sauveur he had been imprisoned for two years at La Roquette.

'Now,' he continued, 'my soul is filled with joy and gladness. Glory! Jesus hath saved me even as a brand from the burning. He will save you too, my friends, if you will but call upon Him! Oh, my sinful friends, do not refuse to obey His voice when He calls! Glory!'

He blinked and smiled knowingly at the old ladies on the front bench while he spoke, as if they had been so many old gaol-bird acquaintances; bidding them flee evil company and give themselves up to that Saviour whose precious blood could wash away the most grievous sin; and then, with a parting wag of his long, lean, wrinkled neck, he took himself off to make way for Watson, of Cardiff.

On her appearance a thrill ran through the room, as though she had been some great actress stepping on to the boards. This Watson was the great attraction of the evening, and her testimony had long been waited for by the President and her friends. Eline recognised the swollen, tearful face and blood-shot eyes which peeped out from under the

English coal-scuttle bonnet with the red ribbons. They were the same that had startled her at Madame Autheman's. On the morning of her visit to the bank Watson had no doubt been rehearsing her testimony, and what anguish it had cost her Lina well knew.

'She still kicks against the pricks, but she will be ready.'

No. She was not ready after all. The sight of the crowd, the gaslight, the cruel stares of all those eyes turned upon her sorrow and her ugliness, had struck her dumb. Her poor bosom heaved with excitement, and she raised her hands instinctively to her throat, as though to rid it of an obstacle that was stifling her.

'Watson!' said a peremptory voice.

The proselyte nodded feebly, to explain that she understood and would obey; but so great was the effort, that something in her throat actually seemed to snap. It was like the running down of a clock chain.

'A night of tears!' she began in a low tone, speaking in French, with an atrocious English accent.

'Louder!' exclaimed the same peremptory voice as before.

Watson of Cardiff started at the command, and dashed into her story at once, still speaking French.

'I have suffered for Jesus,' she breathlessly exclaimed. 'Yea, I have bled for

Jesus, and I have come here to-night to bear witness to the power of the Lord. Glory!'

She would have sent a Palais Royal audience into fits. The people stared with amazement, and asked each other what the woman was talking about. Madame Autheman and Anne de Beuil were seen to take counsel together, and then the Lady President called out 'Eline Ebsen!' beckoning to her to join her on the platform.

The young girl looked at her mother for a moment, and hesitated.

'I am coming.'

She obeyed like one in a dream, foreseeing that she would be asked to translate Watson's testimony to the meeting. 'She will never have the courage,' thought her mother. Why, if any one only stood near the piano when she was playing, it unnerved her. How would she dare to address all these people?

But she did dare, and, quite unabashed, began translating the proselyte's story to the meeting; while Madame Ebsen, with a mother's fond and childish vanity, looked proudly round the hall to see what impression her daughter was making.

Unhappy mother, why do you not look at your child! See what a feverish flush mantles her cheeks, and what a fixed, brilliant light burns in her eyes, which but just now were bent on the ground so timidly.

Ah, had you seen that, perhaps you would have understood that fanaticism is catching, like those nervous maladies which sometimes prostrate a whole row of hospital patients at once; and that the dried-up, haggard woman, standing by your Eline, and withering her with her hot breath, had already communicated to her a little of her own madness!

Terrible and tragic was this testimony of Watson. A child of hers had been drowned one day, under her very eyes, almost in her very arms. She had fallen into a stupor of sorrow from which for a long time nothing had been able to rouse her. Then a woman had come to her saying, 'Watson, arise, and weep no more. All this sorrow has been sent you by the Father as a warning and a punishment. Your heart was filled with earthly affection, though it is written, "Love not." If this first warning does not turn you from your sin, the Father will send other visitations to you. He will take away your husband and the two children He has left you. He will smite you again and again, until you obey Him.'

'What must I do?' asked Watson.

'Renounce the world and follow your Heavenly Master. Thousands upon thousands of ignorant souls are enslaved by Satan. Deliver them. Bear them the glad tidings of salvation, and the lives of your dear ones shall be spared.'

'I will go,' said Watson; and, taking advantage of her husband's absence from the lighthouse near Cardiff, in which he was on duty half of every month, she left her home one night while her children slept. Oh, that dreadful, dreadful night!—that last watch by her babies, who lay in their tiny cots slumbering so peacefully! And that farewell . . . when their little arms clung round her neck with the pretty, unconscious grace of childhood! What tears she had shed . . . and shed even now! For, at the recollection of her troubles they poured down her poor cheeks again, like streams of burning lava. But with God's help, Watson had triumphed over the Evil One; and now she was at peace with Christ, happy, overflowing with happiness. Watson of Cardiff was saved! Glory to God! Saved by the glory of God in Christ Jesus! If her leaders bade her, she would ascend to the highest mountain top, singing and bearing witness to the truth for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Aye, it was terrible, indeed, to mark the contrast between that living, agonised image of despair, and the pious Hosannah that strove to rise to Heaven like the last faint twittering of a poor, wounded bird.

When she had ended her testimony she stood for some time rooted to the spot, unconscious, moving her lifeless lips as if in prayer, though no sound did she utter.

'Take her out,' said Madame Authe-

man, as the organ and the choir began the hymn—

'Sinners, filled with guilty fears,
Behold His wrath abiding,'

and the drowsy audience noiselessly got ready to go. They all seemed anxious to escape from the stifling, hysterical atmosphere. When they got out into the open air they drew a long breath. Their eyes rested with astonishment upon the crowded pavement, the omnibuses and trams coming and going, the carriages filled with people riding down to the Bois to enjoy the fine summer evening, and the electric lights at the Arc de Triomphe, blinding the horses, and casting their cold, bright rays upon the signboards and theatrical posters.

Madame Ebsen, who was still quite overpowered by the success her child had had, and the compliments she had been paid by the President, was in a loquacious mood, and chatted incessantly as they rumbled home in the jolting omnibus. But Eline, who had taken the end seat, hardly said a dozen words all the way from Ternes to the Luxembourg.

'Fancy your translating right off like that, Linette! How proud Lorie would have been if he had only seen you! . . . Wasn't it stifling in that room, though? . . . And that dreadful Watson! To think of her forsaking her husband and children like

that! Do you really think God approves of such things, Linette?'

There was something in the tones of her voice, while she was speaking, which said (she did not venture to say it openly) that she had thought the whole strange ceremony cruel and absurd. 'It's all nonsense,' rose to her lips more than once; but the cold, reserved manner of her daughter stopped her each time from uttering the words. Somehow they did not seem to be in sympathy that evening. Instinctively she drew nearer to Eline and touched her hand. It was cold and heavy.

'What's amiss with you, darling? You are quite frozen. Why don't you shut the window?' said she.

'Let it be, mother. It's very well as it is,' replied Eline, in an undertone. For the first time in her life her mother's affectionate, though empty, talk jarred upon her. Perhaps the omnibus had unnerved her. Those noisy, uninteresting passengers that kept getting in and out annoyed her beyond endurance. It was Sunday, too, and the people you see about are particularly rough and commonplace that day. Drawing back into her corner she tried to isolate herself from them all, and return to the mood she was in when they left the meeting.

What could have come over Paris that night—over the Paris in which chance had willed she should be born, and which she

loved as though it were her own Fatherland? The air seemed heavy with drunken songs, and the cries of starving children, and idiotic babbling, and pestilential gutter smells.

The luxury of the rich quarters they passed through—the crowded *cafés*, the men and women sauntering to and fro in the garish gaslight, wearied and disgusted her still more. It was like standing in the street listening to the music of a masked ball, or watching a swarm of flies dance round a poisonous tree in the sunshine. . . . Oh, how many souls there were to save here! How glorious would it not be to tell these hungry pleasure-seekers of the Saviour! At the very thought of it something within her seemed to swell and bear her aloft, filling her with the same sweet, powerful emotion she had felt while she stood on that platform.

It began to rain. An equinoxial shower swept over the Boulevards, filling the omnibus stations and doorways with affrighted people, who came wading through the puddles like so many drowning ants. Madame Ebsen had fallen asleep, with her kindly face reclining on her bonnet-strings, and Eline fell to meditating on the selfish worldliness of their life. What right had she to despise other people? In what was she better or more useful than her neighbours? How poor and petty was the little good she tried to do, after all! Surely, God asked more of her than that,

Might she not wear out His patience some day by her indifference and sloth? She, too, had had her warning, like Watson; for Grandmother had been taken from her, taken suddenly, ere she had had time to come to Jesus. Might not a fresh blow be dealt her? . . . Her mother! . . . . Oh, if her mother were to die, too, suddenly, as Grandmother had died!

Eline slept but little that night.

Instead of wearing off as the days went on and she returned to her workaday occupations, the impression made upon her that evening deepened and grew. Her mind was full of it even when she was giving her English and German lessons to the children of the wealthy people who had once been her mother's pupils. Despite the kindness and comfort she met everywhere (and comfort was very grateful to her delicate nature), it seemed tedious to Eline now to sit with her little curly-headed charges; tedious to see their wide English collars and their jerseys, with the red anchors on them, ranged round the school-room tables. Their constant questions and babble exasperated her. Like Henriette Briss, she came to think her duties degrading and unworthy of her powers. And the parents, too! . . . How coarse and frivolous the fathers seemed to her! . . . What wretched dolls of women the mothers were! To be sure Baroness Gerspach was

good enough in her way—but so empty-headed. All she thought of was her husband's racehorses; and whenever you called you found her racking her weak brain to invent an attractive name for some new 'crack' or other, unless, indeed, she was worrying over some fresh cure—some wonderful powder or ointment—for the distressing skin disease of the Authemans, which plagued her at each change of the seasons now, as in the school-girl days when she was Deborah Becker. As soon as her lessons were over, Eline found an excuse for hurrying away. She never stayed to *déjeûner* anywhere now, preferring a cake and a glass of iced-water at the confectioner's to the substantial meals of underdone meat and heady port at which that odious Baron, with his double-chin and offensive smile, used to cut such clumsy jokes about her coming marriage.

She was more at her ease with the Countess d'Arlot, who had a little hotel in the Rue Vézelay, close to a Barnabite convent, from which it seemed to have borrowed an odour of sanctity and incense. The luxury and calm of the house, as Eline well knew, hid a great sorrow—a woman's tragedy. Girls in her position soon learn the sad realities of life. A few years after her marriage to a man whom she had passionately loved, the Countess had had a visit from an orphan niece of hers, whom she herself had educated, and one day she had had

proof, brutal, shameless proof, that this niece had once been, and still was, her husband's mistress.

To save the family name from shame and avoid scandal; above all, to spare her daughter the pain of being pointed at as the child of a woman separated from her husband; Madame d'Arlot allowed the matter to be hushed up, and remained, at least apparently, on good terms with her husband, treating him with the politeness and deference which people sometimes show an enemy they are obliged to live with. But she forgot nothing and forgave nothing. Leaving the governesses to take charge of her child—who had already guessed much of the truth, and whose little eyes at meal-times often wandered curiously and restlessly from the over polite father to the silent mother—she steeped her soul in morbid, passionate Catholicism. Often and often Madame Ebsen and Eline had remarked to each other that the poor Countess would have done well to give less of her time to the churches and more to her child, her household, her motherly and womanly duties, which would have surely brought her comfort as real and less barren than those continual prayers. Eline understood her better now. She no longer reproached her for her excessive piety, except in so far as it was selfish and fruitless, an earthly complaint rather than a yearning for God. How different was the

Christianity of a Jeanne Autheman or a Watson!

'Which way are you going, Lina? Let me drive you home,' Madame d'Arlot would say to her when the lesson was over; and as they rode through the city in the luxurious carriage, the Countess would sadden and excite the girl by the story of her ever-present, cherished sorrow, exhorting her to despise and loathe the transient joys of this world, and fix her mind upon the bliss which Heaven alone could give. Sometimes they would stop on their way and enter a church. Eline had no scruples about going into a Catholic place of worship, for the churches of her own faith were closed on week days, and any building devoted to prayer had something of the mystic fascination about it which the religious love. Indeed, she found she could examine herself and commune with God more easily in the solitude of St. Clotilde than at the crowded Sunday services in the Rue Chauchat.

It is quite a surprise to find this Scandinavian church almost next door to the Hotel des Ventes, in the very heart of one of the most thoroughly Parisian quarters in the capital. Nothing is more curious than, on leaving the Boulevards des Italiens, to find yourself all at once in a vaulted hall, coldly lighted from above through the window-panes which cover half the roof, listening to a black-robed minister preaching in harsh,

guttural accents, which echo and re-echo amongst the massive wooden benches occupied by the Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian residents in Paris; white-throated women and girls with luxuriant plaits of yellow hair; men with fair complexions, limpid eyes, and the beards of northern gods, who eat rye bread sweetened with honey, and whose names are all to be found in the Scandinavian register at the Café de la Régence.

Eline had once loved the peaceful hours she spent there at the organ, accompanying the Danish hymns which told her of her fatherland. Now, however, she was preoccupied and absent as she played. What could God care for hymns of praise sung so mechanically by these indifferent voices? Here was another example of the lukewarm, conventional Christianity which had made Madame Autheman so indignant. The praying machines you see in Japan, which grind out prayers when you turn a handle as a hurdy-gurdy grinds out tunes, had as much power, she thought, to touch men's hearts as this kind of religion.

Very offensive to her, too, were the vain, coquettish young girls, with the silvery, flaxen tresses, whom she watched at church criticising each other's dresses; and the quiet, kindly old ladies, with the round, honest faces, whom she overheard exchanging greetings in the church and asking each other to their heavy

teas and dinners before they were fairly outside the sacred building. Even in the sleepy doorkeeper, who looked so like a major-domo as he went round with his butterfly net to make the collection ; even in M. Birk, the minister, with his long locks and languid sidelong glances at the wealthy ewes in the flock ; turn where she would, even in the rusty railings and mouldering pediment of the church, she saw the same signs of sloth and indifference. Nor could she shake off the conviction that Aussandon, the venerable Dean himself, whom she so often saw watering his garden, the man most respected in the whole community, who had given so many proofs of his rigid faith and piety, was at bottom little more zealous than the rest. Oh, this sloth of the spirit!

Not one of her friends or acquaintances had a suspicion of what was passing in the girl's mind. Nobody noticed how her soul was being slowly filled with one fixed, unchangeable idea. Madame Ebsen was quite absorbed by the preparations for the approaching marriage which was to satisfy her dearest wishes. For would not she have a Government official for her son-in-law, and would not her daughter still be near her? Vainly Eline used to say, 'Wait a little longer mother . . . we have plenty of time.' Her mother, who had herself made a sensible, matter-of-fact marriage, paid no attention to the unwillingness of the bride, and went on

calmly getting the *trousseau* ready, rummaging her own wardrobes and drawers in search of some shawl, or brooch, or lace, which could be turned to account for Eline.

'Look, Linette,' she would say, 'here's enough Brussels for the sleeves; perhaps we shall find some more to go round the neck. It would make your wedding dress quite stylish.' Then she had to run about from shop to shop, buying linen and crockery for the two households which were soon to be united. For, you see, it would not do to count much on the resources of the ground-floor establishment. Oh, she knew all about it, for she had been down one day to inspect it with Sylvanire. It was very like those new countries Lorie spoke of, 'Plenty of room for every one, and lots to be done.' Well, with proper economy, with Lina's lessons and translations, and Lorie's salary, they would be able to manage, no doubt. Besides, the ex-Sous-préfet had not abandoned all hope of regaining the Ministerial favour yet. Chemineau had hinted at something of the kind to the Baroness. Only fancy—if they were to be appointed to some first class, or even second class, Sous-préfecture, like that at Cherchell, where they would have a great garden by the sea, and horses and carriages, and, above all, a drawing-room, with crystal chandeliers, for her to help her daughter to do the honours in.

All these dreams Madame Ebsen had to

tell to Lorie, who came up every evening, looking radiant at the prospect of the bliss in store for him. As for Eline, she was only too glad to use Fanny's lesson as a pretext for escaping from all this idle, tedious chatter about her marriage. She married! Why should she marry? While her pupil droned out some monotonous recitation, she was often far away from her, in cloudland, taking no interest in the child's progress, and very little pleasure in seeing her seated in her old place on Grandmother's footstool, or in teaching her to knit and sew. All this only hindered her from doing the new translation she had undertaken, the 'Communings of a Christian Soul with God.'

Ever since her youth Jeanne Autheman had had familiar conversations with the Saviour. She had noted them all down in this book in the form of question and answer. J.-B. Crouzat, director of the Port-Sauveur schools, had added a preface, explaining that this kind of communion with the Unapproachable, which to our modern mind appears so presumptuous and mad, was perfectly natural and orthodox in her whom he called the 'Great Mystic.' 'For her soul,' he wrote, 'was all absorbed in God.'

'Listen, Linette. Isn't this a good idea of Lorie's? He has drawn the plans himself . . . There is to be a staircase here, and the house is to have two stories . . .' And, with his eyeglass, Lorie pointed all

the details out to her on the plan he had sketched out in Indian ink during his leisure hours at the Ministry.

'Charming!' said Eline, hardly turning her head, and burying herself once more in the forbidding mystical effusions in which, as with the fogs of her native Lyons, she had wrapped the disappointed dreams of her girlhood. Then the clock of St. Jacques struck ten. Fanny put her little, innocent arms round her, and bade her 'Good night, dear Mama,' in such a pretty way that for a moment she almost reconciled her to the idea of her marriage.

One afternoon, as Madame Ebsen sat in the house alone, making up her accounts, she received a visit so unexpected and extraordinary that her spectacles almost dropped off her nose from astonishment. Madame Autheman had called to see her!

Fain would the good woman have widened her humble ante-room to make a passage worthy of the great banker's wife and her fortune. This being clearly out of the question, it was comforting to know that, as usual, the drawing-room was at all events in order, the blinds drawn down, the brass-work on the console table brightly polished, and the arm-chairs in their proper place, with neat antimacassars over them. The worst of it was that she was not quite so trim as she might have been herself. 'Dear, dear—

what a sight I must be, to be sure!' she thought, as she went to the door to let in her visitor. 'And Eline not at home, too,' she added, aloud.

'We shall do very well without her,' replied Madame Autheman, whose quiet smile contrasted strangely with Madame Ebsen's excitement; as strangely as the sober taste and richness of her silk dress and black jet trimming did with that worthy creature's untidy, ill-cut garments.

'You have come for the translation, no doubt, Madame?' said Madame Ebsen. 'I am sorry to say Eline has not been able to finish it yet. The poor child has only her evenings free. . . .'

She went on to tell her of her daughter's hardworking life; the lessons she gave, and the long journeys she had to make every day. 'She insists on doing everything, Madame. Directly I stir, she stops me with a "Go and rest, mother; you have done quite enough work for one lifetime." She's a good child, Madame, my Eline.'

The two great tears which trickled down her cheeks as she spoke told the banker's wife all that she seemed about to ask, as her piercing eyes slowly took in every detail of the humble interior.

'How much does your daughter earn by her lessons?' she inquired, when the mother had ceased talking.

'Oh, that depends, Madame. You see

we have to take the dead season and the holidays into account. Very often Lina refuses pupils, because, if she accepted them, she would be obliged to leave me for a time and go into the country. I should say she will make about four thousand francs this year.'

'I will give her twice as much if she will devote herself entirely to my schools,' said Madame Autheman, with a millionaire's easy disdain for money showing itself in the tones of her voice.

Madame Ebsen was dazzled by the magnificence of the offer. What a Godsend eight thousand francs would be to their household! was her first thought. Yet, on reflection, the terms did not seem so very brilliant. Eline would lose all her influential connections if she accepted the offer. She would have to give up the d'Arlots, through whom they hoped some day or other to get Lorie promoted. No; she felt sure her daughter would not consent to the arrangement. Madame Autheman pressed her so hard, however, laying such stress on the fatigue Eline had to endure, and the dangers a pretty girl was exposed to in tramping about Paris unprotected, that Madame Ebsen at last agreed to let her daughter drive down to Port-Sauveur three times a week. Next, the terms and the hours were arranged. Eline was to lunch at Port Sauveur, and be home without fail

by nightfall. 'Although,' said Madame Autheman, 'if she *were* delayed we could always offer her a room for the night at the Château.' But this Madame Ebsen would not hear of.

'Why,' said she, getting quite indignant at the proposal, 'I could never sleep a wink if I had not my child near me!'

On this her visitor rose to go.

'You are very much attached to your child, Madame,' said she, gravely.

'Very much,' replied the mother, moved, in spite of herself, by the sad and serious tone in which the strange remark had been made. 'Very much. I have nothing in the world to care for now but my Eline. We have never been parted. We never *shall* be parted!'

'I thought she was on the point of marrying?'

'Oh, yes; but we shall all live together. That was understood from the very first.'

'I understand this M. Lorie does not profess the true faith?' observed Madame Autheman, when they reached the landing. She appeared not to attach any importance to the remark, but, none the less, it embarrassed the good soul considerably, for she knew something of her visitor's peculiarities.

'Why, no—M. Lorie is not a Protestant, certainly,' she was obliged to admit. 'But the wedding will take place at a Protestant church. Eline insists on it.'

By this time they had reached the bottom of the stairs.

'Good day to you, Madame,' said the banker's wife, abruptly. And before Madame Ebsen, who was quite out of breath, could get to the street door, the carriage drove off at a quick trot, depriving her of the opportunity, for which she had been longing, of letting the admiring neighbourhood see what a fashionable visitor she had had.

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE TOP OF THE HILL.

'Erikshald (near Christiania).

'You see, my dear Eline, I have taken your advice. I have made a desperate effort to free myself from the slavish life in which the crumbs I earned always seemed so hard to me. As my body is, alas! too weak to do the bidding of my spirit, and compels me to languish outside the walls of my beloved convent, I have carried the pure and holy fire that consumes me to the sheltering rocks and fiords of my native Norway. I had not seen them for fifteen long years.

'You ask me about my parting from the princess. Well, it was sudden and strange enough; but I might have expected that from a crotchety woman of her stamp. While we were staying at Buda-Pesth, I one

day happened to meet one of Kossuth's old companions. An ardent patriot, my dear, a hero—a saint—and though he was miserably poor, he wore his wretched rags with dignity. Thinking to do him a charity and an honour, I made him sit beside me that day at the hotel dinner-table. What a scene there was, to be sure! All the ladies rose and refused to eat with a beggar. As if the Divine Master who washed His disciples' feet had not over and over again set us the example of humility! The princess was the most indignant of them all, for, though she affects to be a Liberal and a Christian, she has inherited all the despotic prejudices of her caste and race. We had a grand quarrel, and the end of it was that I found myself in a foreign city alone and penniless, and had actually to get our consul to send me home as a pauper. This would not have greatly disturbed my soul, however (have I not made a vow of poverty?) had I found the refuge I had hoped for here.

'Ah, my dear, what a disappointment I have had!

'At first it seemed delightful to see the little seaside village again, with its wooden cottages, its simple church with the pointed spire looking down upon the blue waves, and the cemetery in which the tangled weeds play wild games of hide-and-seek among the thick strewn crosses that have been blown and tumbled about so by the wind. A fair

place to pray and live with God in, were it but untroubled by the folly and wickedness of the poor human cattle who graze there. Not one ray of Heaven shines in their eyes. Not one of them ever gives a thought to the hereafter. The children play on the little, low cemetery wall. The mothers sit beside them, sewing and sharpening their venomous tongues; and on the Sabbath evenings the pretty village maidens disturb Death by their profane songs and dances, not scrupling even to flaunt their madcap skirts amongst the solemn tombs and crosses which cast their long shadows on the moonlit strand.

'But what I saw at home was sadder than all. My old father and mother greeted me tenderly; and for some time I watched how they strove to find something of the child they had once known, in every look and speech and movement of the woman who had come back to them. When the first excitement was past, however, and they resumed their usual habits, I saw they had failed to discover what they were seeking. The gulf widened between us. Was it I had changed, I wonder, or they?

'Old as he is, my father, who is a carpenter, has to work hard for his living. He builds those birchwood houses which tremble beneath the weight of snow that covers them in the winter time. He makes coffins for the parish, too—thinking never a pious thought as he plies his sorrowful trade.

'He sings coarse songs as he works, and forgets the dreariness of his task in drink and pleasures which women weep over. There is always a bottle hidden under the shavings in his shop. My mother has implored and reasoned in vain. Rough hands push her away when she pleads, and at last she has grown weary of submitting to insult and cruelty. The degrading example before her eyes has corrupted her. . . . She has ceased to be a woman and a mother. She is a slave.

'I know these confessions offend you, my dear, and that you think it impious of me to be so clear-sighted. But, as I told you long ago, Eline, I have cast off earth and been born anew in God. I have rid myself of merely human sentiment. Listen till you reach the end of this domestic drama. Yesterday morning, as I sat in the little room—a kind of cell with plain wooden furniture—in which I take refuge often when I wish to pray, and meditate, and write, and prostrate myself, oh Christ, before Thy guiding Cross, through the thin partition which shut me off from the next room, I heard my father ask my mother harshly "what she had come home for, if she would neither sew, spin, nor help in the housekeeping."

'"Go and ask her," he added. "Go and ask her." And presently my mother stole in gently, looking very much perplexed, as she always does, and chided me for my

idleness. My sisters, she said, were all married. One, the youngest, was in service at Christiania, and always managed to send part of her wages home to help her parents. Now that my health had improved I ought really to —— to ——. I did not give her time to finish. Taking between my hands the worn old face which had once been so dear to me, I kissed it and bathed it with the last tears I shall ever shed over it.

'What will become of me now that my parents have cast me out? I want so little, too, to keep me from starvation. I have been offered a place at St. Petersburg. More teaching — more humiliation and slavery! Well! what does it matter, after all? This trial of family life has convinced me that I have died to the world—to my family as well as all else. My heart is closed to earth, Eline, and human feeling will never again find a place in it.'

. . . . . .

Eline received this letter from Henriette Briss one night on her return from Port-Sauveur. She read it at the table on which the two covers were laid facing each other, with the bouquet between, which Madame Ebsen never failed to put in her darling's glass to show that this daily meal they took together was to her a daily feast. She stood there motionless, waiting for her mother, without even taking off her hat and gloves, looking fixedly at this open letter which was full

of the very same ideas she had instilled into her daily at the schools. For though the phrases they used differed, both religions preached the same doctrine of death, and abnegation, and human nothingness. What fatality had prompted Henriette Briss to join her sorrowful voice just then to Jeanne Autheman's?

The door opened, and, as her mother entered, she slipped the letter into her pocket, well knowing what Madame Ebsen would think of it. What was the use of arguing when no agreement was possible? How could she confess that (though indeed she was not yet able to say that she had cast off earth) she had begun to see that there were duties higher and holier than those we owe our parents, and that Henriette's blasphemy had ceased to shock her!

'Back already, Linette,' said Madame Ebsen. 'I did not hear you come in. I was downstairs with Sylvanire. Have you been home long? . . . Come, dear, take your hat off.'

Eline seemed so weary, so languid, as she carelessly took off her hat, and seated herself at table without even looking in the glass to smooth her hair; she ate so little during the meal, and answered the tender questions put her so abstractedly, that her mother grew quite uneasy. They were dining (as they always did in summer) close to the open window looking on to the

garden; and as they sat there the noisy twittering of the birds bidding farewell to the sunset was wafted in to them.

'Why, M. Aussandon has his grandchildren with him to-day!' exclaimed Madame Ebsen. 'It must be rather tiring for the poor man. I suppose Madame Aussandon is away. They say the Major is to be married soon.'

This, by the way, was a mere invention of the good woman's; a device she had hit upon, hoping to find out whether a touch of sentiment did not still linger at the bottom of Eline's heart. She had been very cold to Lorie for days past, but the indifferent 'Ah!' with which she answered her mother's glance set her mind at rest on that score. No. It could not be that.

Madame Ebsen grew more and more anxious. She looked at her daughter's eyes. They were hollow and had bluish circles round them. Her face was losing its youthful freshness, and her chin had become strangely pointed. Something extraordinary must be troubling the child. What could it be? Suppose she put her a few questions about her experience at Port-Sauveur?

'So the schools are quite close to the Château, and the only walk you get is from one to the other? You don't take exercise enough, my dear. It is really too tiring for you to sit there for five hours at a time without stirring . . . Well, I hope you go

to see Maurice at the Lock now and then?'

No, she had not been. Then Madame Ebsen burst into loud laments about the poor boy, who had been a great deal neglected while the joyous preparations for the marriage had been going on. 'His father fancies he can read up for his naval examinations better down there. For my part, I can't think why he shouldn't study at home just as well. Ah, my child, how much good you will be able to do in your new home! There's a noble task waiting for a true and earnest woman there.'

Earnest indeed, for nothing seemed able to rouse her from the indifferent torpor (or was it only weariness?) which kept her lingering at table in a reverie long after the meal was finished, with her eyes steadily fixed upon the same golden spot of sky beyond the trees.

'Shall we go for a stroll, child? It is so fine out of doors, and we could take Fanny with us.'

At first Eline would not. On her mother pressing her, however, she consented, with an 'If you wish it. Let us go,' uttered in the tone of one who comes to a grave and important decision.

On these fine summer evenings the end of the Luxembourg Garden, bordering on what used to be the Pépinière, with its shrubberies and formal espaliers, and its

Japanese clematis with the trailing foliage and purple bells, its clumps of hot-house yuccas and cactuses, and its gleaming white statues, looks like a trim, green, freshly-watered park. Here you have none of the dust and noise of the great avenues or the Boulevard St. Michel. The sparrows hop about the grass undisturbed, and take their share of the crumbs the children throw to the blackbirds.

The people from the neighbouring streets who frequent these winding alleys and stare at the model beehive, are very different from those you meet on the terraces at the other end of the garden. Here come quiet shopkeepers and family parties, and women with sewing or books in their hands, who turn their backs to the gravel walks and sit with their faces towards the grass till the last ray of daylight has faded. Here, too, come old gentlemen with their noses buried in newspapers, and troops of merry children who run races, and little girls, with babies, who have been brought here, though it is so late in the day, because their mothers are not home yet from their work to take care of them.

When he had found Madame Ebsen a seat in front of some of her favourite flags, Lorie asked Eline to take a stroll with him. She consented with feverish eagerness, though usually she tried to avoid being alone with her lover. The poor fellow was overjoyed.

He looked quite proud and young again as they walked round the English Garden in which other couples (betrothed, perhaps, like themselves) were lounging. He made her so many pretty speeches, that he never noticed how very silent the girl was; or, if he noticed it at all, only set it down to modesty, natural enough now that the wedding day was so near. Yes; though the exact day had not been fixed yet, it had been settled that they should be married during the next vacation, when the departure of Eline's pupils, and the closing of the colleges, would allow them leisure for setting up housekeeping. During the next vacation —and they were in the month of July already.

Ah! how full of hope and sunshine that July appeared to Lorie! It dazzled and blinded him like the windows that reflected the sunset over yonder, in the direction of the Boulevard, and formed, as it were, a golden horizon.

'Go and play in front of us,' said Eline, sharply, as Fanny came to her side to walk with her. The child obeyed, and went back to the swallows that skimmed along the path, and the chirping sparrows that hopped about, almost under the very feet of the loungers, or made sudden darts from the shrubberies to the statues, audaciously stopping from time to time to rest on the mane of Cäin's Lion, or the uplifted finger of Diana. The

daylight waned. The purple shadows began to lengthen. Eline watched them silently for some time, and suddenly exclaimed—

'I heard something to-day which pained me very much. It seems that Maurice is preparing for his first communion.'

Maurice had just written home to say that he was studying his catechism at Petit-Port with the curé, who was enchanted at the idea of having one communicant at least in his church that year. But why should that pain Eline?

'You should have told me of the matter,' she continued, severely. 'I should never have agreed to it. If I am to be the mother of your children, and guide them through life, they must be of my own religion—the only true faith.'

Could this hard, imperious voice be Lina's—the voice of the charming girl with the placid smile? Could it be Lina who harshly bid the child begone when she ran up to them, wondering at their changed looks and manner? The whole garden seemed to be transformed and grow indistinct, as the sunshine faded out of the distant windows and the twilight darkened. A feeling of melancholy stole over Lorie at the idea of having to oppose the cold decision of Eline. However, he protested feebly. She must, he said, surely be too sensible not to understand that it was a case of conscience. The children had been brought

up as Catholics by their mother, and the most ordinary respect for the dead woman enjoined——. But she stopped him, drily.

'You must choose between us. . . . I could not pledge my life to you if we are to have constant quarrels about our creeds.'

'Oh, Eline! Surely our love will help us to disregard such things?'

'It is a question of Faith, and there is nothing more important than our Faith.'

Now nightfall had come. The birds had ceased to twitter in the bushes. The few stragglers who were still in the garden began to make their way slowly to the one gate that remained open; and, as the last reflected ray died away from the windows, from afar they heard the roll of the drum, giving the signal for departure. All that Lorie seemed to see of Lina was her two great eyes, and even these he hardly recognised—they were so fixed and hard.

'I shall say no more about the matter,' she remarked; 'you know my conditions now.'

Fearing they had lingered too long, the mother joined them with Fanny. 'We must go home, I'm afraid,' said she. 'What a pity! It's such a beautiful evening.' She had the talking to herself, though, all the way, while they two walked slowly homeward side by side; together, and yet so far from one another, so divided.

'We shall see you presently, of course?' said Madame Ebsen, when they reached the

foot of their staircase. Lorie went in without daring to make any answer, and let the child take her books upstairs alone for her lesson. She came down very soon after, sobbing her little heart out.

'I'm n—n—not to have any more lessons, Mademoiselle says. Mademoiselle won't be my mama any more. Oh dear! oh dear!'

Sylvanire took her in her arms and carried her off to her bedroom, choking with grief.

'There, there, dear! don't cry like that. Don't now, don't! I won't leave you if she does; mind you that.' The nurse embraced her effusively, and gave her a sounding kiss in the joy she felt at getting back her child. She foresaw the rupture as she had foreseen the love.

Next moment in came Madame Ebsen in great agitation.

'My poor Lorie! what can it mean?' she exclaimed.

'She told you all, I suppose?' answered Lorie. 'How can I agree to the thing? If it only concerned myself, I might perhaps consent; for I love her so, there is nothing I would not do to please her. . . . But the children! Knowing what their mother's wishes were, I cannot . . . I have no right. . . . How could she be so cruel to poor Fanny, too? she has not left off crying yet! Hark!'

'Eline is crying, too, upstairs. She has locked herself into her bedroom so that I shall not have a chance of speaking to her. . . . Would you have believed it? . . . To shut me out, when we have never kept a secret from each other.'

Stirred to the depths of her sluggish but tender nature, the good woman repeated the same words over and over again. 'What can be the matter with her? What can be the matter with her?' Her daughter had quite changed of late. She had given up playing and reading—cared nothing for the things that had once amused her! It was hard enough even to get her to go out for a walk!

'I had to force her, almost, to-night! She's getting quite pale, and eats hardly anything. Her Grandmother's death must be preying on her mind.'

'Port-Sauveur and Madame Autheman, more likely,' said Lorie.

'Do you really think so?'

'Yes! I feel sure it's that woman's doing. It's she that is robbing us of our Lina!'

'You may be right . . . yes, you may be right. They were so rich, though, and paid so well,' added Madame Ebsen. Seeing, however, that the lover shook his head at all her arguments, she ceased.

'Well, well! it will all come right, I dare say,' she remarked, clutching at the straw of hope she found in wilfully shutting her eyes to her misfortune.

All that night and the next day, while he sat at his desk doing his mechanical clerk-work, Lorie remained firm in his resolve not to give way. His work consisted in opening all the papers and cutting out every article, paragraph, and line in which the Minister was spoken of, adding the name of each print to the extracts on the margin. He was so absorbed by the drama of his own life that particular morning, that he did his business rather more hastily than usual, in order that he might finish several drafts of letters he intended to write Lina. And it was not easy to write, with the cackle and laughter of his fellow-clerks disturbing him every minute. He had done one to his satisfaction, however, when in the afternoon he was summoned to his Director's office.

Chemineau had left some time before. Continuing his rapid rise, the ex-Préfet of the province of Algiers had been promoted to the control of another department, and there was some talk, it appeared, of making him Préfet de Police.

'Chemineau's going ahead!' said the clerks, when they discussed him.

In his stead there reigned an apoplectic official who worked himself into a terrible rage when his subordinate entered the room.

'I never heard of such a thing!' he exclaimed. 'Have you no respect for his Excellency the Minister?'

'I? No respect?' murmured Lorie.

'Yes, you Sir, no respect!' shouted the Director. 'You actually take the liberty of making abbreviations, Sir! *Mon. Univ.* for *Moniteur Universel*, Sir! Did you imagine his Excellency would understand what you meant? No, Sir. His Excellency couldn't understand, and didn't understand. It was not his business to understand, Sir! . . . My fine friend of the 16th of May, you had best be careful.'

It was like trampling on a man when he is down. Lorie went back to his desk dazed and disheartened, saying to himself that he should lose his lucky star with his Lina. On reaching home he was greeted by the news that Fanny had eaten nothing since morning, and had been standing all day waiting for Mademoiselle to come in. And Eline had not turned her head at the child's cry of 'Mama! mama!'

'It was cruel of her not to do that,' said Sylvanire, indignantly. 'The little one might have fallen ill of sorrow. I was thinking, M'sieu,' she added, with some hesitation, 'that if Monsieur had no objection, it would do her good to go down for a time to her brother at the Lock. The fresh air would soon set her right.'

'As you like, as you like,' replied Lorie, dejectedly.

After dinner he retired to his room to console himself with a little letter-sorting. He had not done any for a long while past,

and the dust on the cardboard boxes lay so thick, that it had become no easy matter to find anything, despite the multitudinous labels and endorsements which, following the example of the Service, he had adopted for the classification of his private documents, however unimportant they were. Do what he would, though, his thoughts persisted in wandering to a room overhead on the first floor, in which he heard the quiet movements of his pitiless Eline, as she walked from the window to the table, or from the piano to Grandmother's seat. In every corner of the bare, cheerless room he sat in, he saw a corresponding corner of the well-furnished, pleasant, sociable room above him. He fell to thinking, poor man, and his heart bringing pressure to bear upon his conscience, before long he found himself casting about for compromises—subterfuges. After all, what she asked was reasonable enough. One pious bond to unite herself, her husband, and her children before the same God. For it would appear there were several of these Gods. Besides, the State recognised both religions. A great point, that, for a functionary. Even looking at the matter purely with a view to his children's welfare—where would they find a more tender, sensible, or motherly mother? If he gave up this match they would never have any one but a servant to take charge of them. He had no anxiety on the score of Maurice. *His* future was

happily settled, thanks to his vocation—but there was Fanny. He saw her before him again as she appeared on her arrival from Algeria. A poverty-stricken, humble-looking child with coarse red hands, and a coarse shawl like Sylvanire's. . . . In his distress and pain he evoked the memory of his dear wife. 'Help me! counsel me!' he cried. But he cried to the dead woman in vain, for he could no longer see her image. In its place there always rose the fair, young, tempting face of Eline Ebsen. She had stolen from him even the memory of his first happiness. Ah, cruel Lina!

The letter-sorting did not make much progress that evening. Lorie left it at last and went to the open window. A light shone at Aussandon's window on the opposite side of the garden; and through the panes he saw the figure of the Dean bent over his desk. He had never spoken to the old man, though he had often exchanged bows with him as they passed each other. A tall and upright old man, for all his seventy-five years, his white hair, and the curly white beard which framed his kind and intellectual face. Madame Ebsen had often told him the story of his noble life. Indeed, he knew it almost by heart.

He was a Cévénal mountaineer—a peasant—this Aussandon. Ambition had he none; and had he been alone in the world, he would never have left his first cure

at Mondardier, in the Mézenc country, his blackstone church, his vines, flowers, and bees, all of which he loved to tend in the intervals of rest his religious duties left him. For he tended his flock and his garden with equal care, finding sermons in seeds, and sowing good seed in the pulpit.

On Sundays, after the village church service, he preached on the mountain-side to the shepherds, and woodcutters, and cheesemakers. Three wooden steps formed the rude pulpit that had been raised for him on the heights far above the pines, and the chestnuts, and the meadowlands, where nothing grew or lived but the flies. His finest sermons (so grand and yet so simple) were addressed to this poor congregation, within sight of a pastoral landscape which civilised humanity seemed never to have visited; where the tinkling bells of the grazing cattle scattered about the slopes alone replied to the voice of the preacher. Aussandon never lost the fresh and lofty accents he brought away from the mountain; and it was to them, to his unpolished eloquence and free use of *patois* imagery, that he owed a great part of the fame he won later on when he came to preach in Paris. When his sermon was ended, he often dined in a hut, off a frugal dish of chestnuts, and descended afterwards to the village escorted by a whole tribe of people singing hymns. Sometimes a terrible storm

would burst over them. One of those storms in which the thunder rolled above him and the lightning played about his feet, as it played about the feet of Moses on Sinai.

He would gladly have lived unknown for ever in his rustic home, but Madame Aussandon refused to hear of it. This terrible little woman was the daughter of a neighbouring tax-gatherer. She was a trim and active village maid, blooming as a peach, with sparkling eyes, a projecting chin, and lips, showing a row of long, sharp teeth, very suggestive of a goodnatured watch-dog that would keep a firm grip if once it got hold of a morsel. She ruled her husband, stirred up his ambition, and worried him a good deal—in his own interest partly, and still more in the interest of their numerous progeny. First she had him appointed to a cure at Nîmes, which he left for Montauban, and at length they both came to Paris. His wisdom and his eloquence were his own; but it was Goody (as he called her when she was very obstinate) who made him known to the world, and, by so doing, in his own despite made his name and fortune.

She had to be economical for both of them; for in the village Aussandon gave away his whole substance. His linen and clothes all went to the poor, and he had been known to throw the fuel on his own hearth out of the window, when his wife had gone out and taken the key of the wood-

cellar with her. She brought up her eight sons hardly; but you never saw a hole in their boots or breeches. Wherever she went she took her sewing and knitting with her, and stitched away as she walked or talked, or rode in a *diligence* to see her children after they had been scattered about at school in every direction. She expected every one to be as active as herself, so her husband got no peace till he had settled and married the eight boys in various places in France and abroad. A nice number of tiring, fashionable funerals and weddings he had had to attend ere he effected his purpose.

Pastor Aussandon soon reached a position apart from, and superior to, the rival orthodox and liberal branches of the Reformed Church. Indeed, the worthy man had much more work and glory than he quite liked. Often he sighed at the thought of the leisure and liberty he had enjoyed in the days when he preached on the hillside at Mondardier. At last, however, he was appointed Lecturer of the Faculty of Theology. Then, and not till then, his wife allowed him a little rest. He gave up everything but his lectures, and resumed the calm, meditative life he had lived in the Mézenc country. 'At the top of the hill at last!' he would sometimes say, as he pondered over the many moral privations and hardships he had bravely endured before he attained his later comfort and happiness.

His only troubles now were those separations from his dear tyrant, who every now and then, old as she was, would go off suddenly to see one of her boys. No distance or fatigue daunted the plucky old lady. Sometimes it was Paul, the major, who saw her appear unexpectedly in the camp at the Autumn manœuvres, eagerly deciphering the numbers of the battalions and companies, as she wandered from tent to tent in search of him. Sometimes it was from the engineer at Commentry that she drew an amazed exclamation of, 'Why, I declare it's you, mother!' as he saw her stepping out of a miner's cage at the mouth of some dingy shaft, and hurriedly ran forward to her assistance.

Madame Aussandon was away from home now, or the Dean would certainly not have been working so late at the open window. He was calmly and thoughtfully preparing his next day's lecture. Seeing he was alone, something prompted Lorie to go across to him. He had only to walk to the other side of the garden. A gentle tap at the door, and in a moment he found himself in a comfortable study, with piles of unbound books ranged round the walls, and a large portrait of Madame Aussandon over the desk, seeming to watch and smile upon the labours of her excellent husband.

Lorie told him the object of his visit at once, and as simply as possible. He wished

to be converted to the Reformed faith with his children. In fact he had been thinking of it for some time past, and now the matter pressed—pressed. What should he have to do?

Aussandon quieted him with a smile and a wave of the hand. He had better send the children to the Sunday school. Lorie himself, however, would have to investigate his new faith thoroughly; to study, meditate, and compare; to learn to see and judge things with his own eyes, as the religion of light and truth permitted, nay, commanded men to do. He would give him the address of a brother-minister, for he was over weary and old himself to undertake to convert him (though indeed you would never have imagined it had you heard how ably and eloquently he spoke to this weak, vacillating Lorie). Yes, very old and weary. He was at the top of the hill.

A moment of embarrassed silence followed. Lorie turned his head aside, half regretting the step he had taken, and the Dean looked down at the blank sheet in front of him, in search of inspiration.

'You are doing this for Eline's sake, are you not?' said he, after a short pause.

'Yes.'

'Does she exact it of you?'

'She does, or the people who are behind her do.'

'I know. I know.'

He knew. He had seen Madame Autheman's carriage stop in front of the door that day, and knew what intrigues the woman was capable of. If Goody had not forbidden him, he would have put the mother on her guard long since. Even now, reading to the very bottom of Lorie's heart as he did, he was sorely tempted to speak out. 'Ay, well do I know Jeanne Autheman,' thought Aussandon. 'A woman who breaks hearts and ruins homes. A pitiless, unfeeling woman. Wherever she goes, tears, separations, and sorrow follow her. Warn her mother, for you are not the only person who may suffer. Tell her to take Lina away at once—at once. Tear her from the clutches of this ghoul, this living corpse, this devourer of souls. . . . There may be time yet.'

Aussandon thought all this, but he dared not say it, for fear of the little old lady on the wall in front of him, who stood so bolt upright in her frame, and checked his impulse with that cautious look of hers, threatening to spring at him like a watchdog if he let one imprudent syllable escape him.

CHAPTER X.

THE RETREAT.

DÉJEÛNER at Port-Sauveur was as grave and regular an affair as all the other business of the day in the Château. Punctually at eleven every morning, after the banker's departure, Jeanne Autheman gathered the staff of her pious institution about her. Each had his or her appointed place. At the head of the long table sat the Lady President, having on her right Anne de Beuil, and on her left J.-B. Crouzat, the schoolmaster, a hollow-cheeked man with a short stubbly beard, a narrow forehead, and glassy blue eyes, in which lurked a fanatical fire. He was a Charentais, who had been training for Holy Orders under Aussandon's direction, when one day a friend of his took him to hear the Evangelist. He went away in a state of spiritual excitement, very like that produced on many devout women, especially the more aristocratic ones, by certain white-robed Dominican preachers. In his case, however, the impression made was lasting. It was five years since he had left his friends and family, sacrificed his ambition and his future, for this humble schoolmaster's place which brought him close to Jeanne. In the country round about he was popularly supposed to be her lover. It was the only

way in which the coarse, dull rustics could account for the fervour with which the disciple hung upon the lips of the apostle. But the Evangelist had never had a lover. The only words of passion ever spoken by that pure, clenched mouth were frozen into everlasting crystal on the shores of the Mer de Glace.

Facing the Charentais sat Mademoiselle Hammer, the schoolmistress, a doleful creature, who spoke very seldom, always had her eyes cast down, and answered all questions by a melancholy 'Yes,' which expressed both resignation and approval. There was a crushed look about her whole person. Her stooping shoulders, and the flat little nose in the centre of her white face, seemed to have all the weight of original sin pressing upon them. Indeed, her sense of man and woman's unworthiness was so overwhelming that she was wholly useless for proselytising purposes, and hardly dared to teach the little schoolchildren.

On Sundays the seat at the foot of the table was reserved for Pastor Birk. On week-days the girl or boy pupil who had the highest marks for Scripture recitation was privileged to fill it. The education at Port-Sauveur was exclusively religious. All the lessons taught were taken from the Gospels, the copybook texts, and the picture alphabets included. So great a faith had Jeanne Autheman in the Testament, that she be-

lieved in its power over neophytes even when it was read without understanding. So do the sick Arabs believe in the efficacy of the passages from the Koran which they bind round their foreheads. It was melancholy to hear the little peasants drawling and stammering out the verses of the most wonderful of Books, as they held it in their hot and dirty hands, and sullied it with tears wrung from their laziness.

Young Nicolas, the boy from the Reformatory at La Roquette, was perhaps the best example of the results obtained by this system of education. He nearly always occupied the seat of honour opposite the President. He knew the whole of the New Testament, and a good part of the Old, by heart. He had the four Gospels pat, and was no less familiar with Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and the Epistles. At every turn he quoted half-articulate texts from one or the other, unconsciously, as though he had been a phonograph. Great and silent was the admiration of his hearers at the spectacle. God surely spoke by the mouth of this youth! And what a mouth it had been! What blasphemy and curses it had uttered only three years before in that prison! Could there be a more striking or miraculous proof of the good done by the Evangelical schools? Even though a few sinful stains, such as falsehood, prevarication, and gluttony, still clung to Nicolas, and though you might

often witness the edifying sight of good and evil contending for victory in his badly-whitewashed conscience, and though the purifying influence of Ecclesiastes was sometimes powerless to check his love of garnishing his conversation with gaol-bird slang.

Eline Ebsen's place, when she lunched at the Château, was next to this phenomenon. Every one knew her story, and had heard of the impious marriage she was meditating. Nor was it a secret that, though the leaven of salvation had begun to work, the evil had so far been too much for it. Only the untiring patience and sweetness of Madame Autheman would have persevered in the face of such wicked rebellion. Anne de Beuil would have had the stubborn witch scourged and driven out of the temple by the whole pack of them long ago. 'Get you gone to your master Satan, if you *will* burn in hell!' she would have said. And so would no doubt have said J.-B. Crouzat.

Eline instinctively felt she was amongst enemies. Nobody talked to her, or, but for an occasional glance of anger and contempt, even thought it worth while to look at her. She cowered under the eye of the silent verger who waited on them, and bowed her head in mute acknowledgment of her inferiority to the saintly persons round her. And yet, in the very dreariness of the *déjeûners* at Port-Sauveur; in the conventual simplicity of the dishes—the boiled meat,

the watery vegetables, the stewed prunes; in the solemnity of the great table at which they sat at such a distance from each other; there seemed to be a gravity and sanctity which touched her religious feeling almost as though she had been a sinner watching the Last Supper of the Lord Himself. She loved the conversation she heard, though she was not suffered to take a part in it; and delighted in listening to the strange, mystic words with which it was sprinkled—words symbolic, such as vine, tent, and flock—abstract words, such as trial, expiation, the wind of the desert, and the breath of the Spirit. And she grew to take an interest in a number of things of which the names conveyed hardly any idea to her when they were mentioned; the Mission, the Workwomen, the mysterious Retreat (in which she had so far not set foot), and the religious news of the people in the neighbourhood.

'I am pleased with Gélinot; the Spirit has moved him,' Anne de Beuil would say. Her piercing eye was everywhere. Or else, 'Baraquin is going astray again. He has not come to church for a month!'—which naturally suggested a savage diatribe against bad Christians, renegades, and sinners who wallowed in their iniquity like filthy swine. Eline guessed that the delicate hint was meant for her; and yet surely it was difficult to find any analogy between the biblical animal and this gentle, shamefaced girl,

whose very ear-tips blushed at the remark beneath the wealth of fair soft hair that covered them.

'Anne! Anne!' sometimes exclaimed Madame Autheman, 'drive not the sinner to despair;' chiding the bigot with the infinite tenderness of Jesus rebuking Simon the Pharisee. Then in the same calm tone she would address them at such length and so persuasively, that J.-B. Crouzat swelled with repressed enthusiasm, while poor Eline lost herself in a golden mystic dream of glory, in which she longed to disappear and be annihilated, like an ephemera in the sunshine.

How comes it, then, that this child who weeps and blushes when the blackness of her sin is shown her—this girl who seems so sensitive and pliable—still refuses to commit herself to a decisive course? For a full month she has come to Port-Sauveur, and the President marvels that she has not yet succeeded in converting her. Can Anne de Beuil be right? Is the Evil One to snatch away a soul which might be so precious to the Mission? Madame Autheman has almost begun to think this must be the case; and when one morning, on entering the Refectory as usual precisely at eleven, she sees no Eline standing humbly at her place waiting, she says to herself, 'It is all over; she will not come any more.' Just

then, however, the door opens and the girl walks in looking flushed and tearful, but, strange to say, though she is late, in no way disconcerted. She quietly explains that she has been delayed a quarter of an hour at Choisy by an accident on the line, takes her seat, and asks the verger for the bread. When the conversation is resumed, she joins in it as naturally and easily as possible, talks of tents, and vines, and flocks like the rest of them, till she hears the harsh voice of Anne de Beuil exclaim:

'Who can those people at the Lock be? . . . A big brazen hussey came down yesterday with a little girl. . . . They say she is the sister of that boy Maurice. More fish for the curé to fry.'

At this Eline grows pale indeed, and her eyes fill with tears. Fanny, her little Fanny there, so near to her! As she bends her head over the table in fancy she sees her dear delicate face again, and the ribbon that bound up her silky hair, the darling! . . . But what is this gaol-bird next her saying?

'The bloke at the Lock, do you mean? Oh, crikey! What a devil of a hunt I had after the kid this morning!' exclaims a voice at her elbow, to the scandal and consternation of that saintly gathering.

It is Satan speaking by the mouth of Nicolas. The unhappy wretch seems dismayed himself by what he has said, and his face gets as purple and convulsed as

though something had gone down the wrong way and was choking him. Breathlessly they watch every phase of the dreadful struggle between the spirits of good and evil. At last the young scamp recovers, heaves a deep sigh, drinks a whole glass of wine off at a gulp, and bursts into a verse of the Psalmist: 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips.'

Hallelujah! Satan has been overthrown again.

A murmur of gratitude runs round that saintly table; and, as the twelve o'clock train rushes by, all rise and fold their napkins, glorifying the Almighty!

'Is it really true? Are you in earnest? Oh, my dear child, let me kiss you for the joyful news!'

Cold, rigid Jeanne Autheman was pressing Eline excitedly to her heart. 'Come and tell me all about it,' said she, turning towards the little drawing-room. When they reached the door, however, a thought struck her, and she exclaimed, 'No, not here. Let us go to the Retreat.'

'To the Retreat! What an honour, Lina!'

Anne de Beuil stopped her mistress on the sunlit staircase to tell her that Baraquin was waiting to see her.

'You must attend to him,' replied Ma-

dame Autheman; 'I have not time to.' And with a quiet laugh, she whispered, 'She is saved,' as she walked away leaning on Eline's arm, leaving her acolyte to interrogate the old bargee, who had risen from the bench he was sitting on, and now stood holding his cap in one hand, and scratching his hard, round, perspiring skull with the other.

'Baraquin,' said Anne de Beuil, 'why have you given up coming to meeting?'

'Why, yer see, M'mselle, this is how it is . . .,' began the bargee, casting a regretful look at the black dress that was vanishing in the distance; for he knew it would have been much easier to tackle the Evangelist than this old stager.

'Why, yer see, Madame Autheman's religion 's as good as another, I s'pose, and there ain't no curé can say mass *right off straight* better nor she does. . . . But, yer see, the old man's got a lot of children as go to the other church, and they falls foul of their old father. So I thought as how I'd go to mass at Juvisy just t' oblige them. And somehow all those candles and saints and the Blessed Virgin made me feel queer like, and I thought as how I'd go again.'

It was not the first time Baraquin had tried this game in the hope of getting forty francs or so, and a new coat. But Anne de Beuil was not to be imposed on. Nothing could have been more comical than to see

the two peasants bargaining about the price of that battered old soul (it would have been dear at any price), as if they were at Sceaux market. What a triumph for the curé, thought Anne, if Baraquin returned to the Catholic Church! However, she pretended to let him go, without giving him anything, and watched him hobble down the steps groaning and coughing, and bent almost double with rheumatism. When he was half-way down she called him back.

'Baraquin!'

'Beg pardon?'

She led him up the three steps and into the little green drawing-room. As they passed young Nicolas, who had been a silent onlooker of the whole scene, the old man gave him a wink, and the edifying youth instantly rolled out an appropriate text: 'I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.' No sooner was he alone again than he threw aside his hypocritical mask, and, sticking his hands in his pockets, lounged away over the bridge, whistling, and looking as vicious and blackguardly a young gaol-bird as you could have wished to meet.

Although a month had elapsed since Eline first came to Port-Sauveur, all she knew of the estate was the flower-garden, Gabrielle's staircase, and the long avenue

leading to the church and the white school buildings. Madame Autheman had usually chosen the avenue for those long talks in which she had striven to convert her, and show her what must be the consequences of the sinful marriage she was pledged to. 'God will smite you in your mother and in your children. Your face shall be foul with weeping, even as Job's was.'

The poor girl had resisted, pleaded her plighted troth, asked pity for the motherless children; and often she had gone home half but not quite persuaded, and shattered by emotion, only to begin the same sad walk a few days later, up and down the fragrant avenue, under the overarching branches in which the birds sang and the sunlight danced, casting bright rays athwart the path; rays which they swept away with their black skirts as they walked on, while the Evangelist spoke of death and redemption, and Lina felt all hope of happiness, all will, ooze from her open, bleeding veins.

This time Madame Autheman took her further than usual. They crossed the park with its stiff groups of trees and well-kept paths; and the Dutch garden beyond it, with the quaint clipped box, and the yews cut into the likeness of vases, colonnades, and porticoes, round which twined ivy and acanthus. Jeanne said nothing. She walked on, leaning on the arm of the neophyte; and nothing broke the solemn silence of Jeanne's

initiation but the rustle of the dresses and the occasional snap of the twigs which, with her instinctive love of order, the Lyonnaise could not refrain from pruning as she passed, wherever they broke the regularity of the hedges.

They stopped at a rusty gate, which Jeanne Autheman opened. On the other side of it the grounds grew more wild and rustic. Long grassy avenues stretched away to right and left. Clustering birches shivered on the skirts of the purple, heathclad glades; birds chirped and sang in the bushes; and the mossy oaks and beeches seemed hoary with age. At last, in the middle of a clearing, they saw a real Swiss pinewood châlet, with a wooden staircase outside it and tiny window-panes, and verandahs, and a sloping roof, with heavy stones upon it to enable it to resist the mountain storms. This was the Retreat.

In the early days of her married life Jeanne had had this pious refuge built for her, far from the Refinery and the house of wickedness, in memory of Grindelwald and of her first communings with the Lord. When the Mission was founded it was here she brought her workwomen—the elect who were to spread the Gospel, after they had been prepared for their noble work by some months of probation spent under her eyes. Downstairs was a low, gloomy room known as the Prayer Hall, that set one thinking of

the middle deck of one of those Mission ships which carry the glad tidings to the English whalers. Here they were taught to preach, and here Madame Autheman, or J.-B. Crouzat, gave them instruction in singing and theology. The rest of their time was devoted to solitary meditation, till the day came when Jeanne declared them worthy to go out into the world, and kissed them on their foreheads, bidding them, in the words of the Bible, 'Go, work to-day in my vineyard.'

And they went, poor creatures, generally to some great manufacturing centre like Lyons, Lille, or Roubaix, where sin works most havoc, and the souls of men are black as the skins of negroes—black as the narrow town alleys or the coal-stained soil of the place. They took up their abode in the heart of the faubourgs, and began their labours, teaching children, according to the admirable method of P.S., during the day, and preaching the glad tidings in the evening. But the vineyard was hard and stony—the vintage far from abundant. Almost everywhere they preached to cold and scanty audiences, enduring the coarse mockery and insults of the working-men who came to hear them, and suffering much from the petty persecution of the local authorities, against whom, at that distance from Paris, even the influence of the Authemans was often powerless to protect them. Nothing daunted,

however, and full of faith, they went on sowing the good seed. For though faith be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, it will grow and bring forth fruit in the hardest heart. Sincere they must have been, or they would never have resigned themselves to such lonely lives for the pittance of a hundred francs a month doled out to them by Madame Autheman. They broke all affectionate ties asunder as indifferently as Madame Autheman pruned away the superfluous twigs on her hedges. Though no convent walls surrounded them, they lived like nuns, yielding obedience with the same meekness, starting on a journey or changing their place of residence at a moment's notice, and returning to the Retreat every year to ask fresh strength of Jesus.

Now and then a workwoman met an honest man on her road, and married. One, and one only, ran off with the money that was to have been used for paying her rent, and clothing, and helping her to redeem souls. As a rule they grew attached to the cause, devoted their whole energies to it, and became mystical to the point of ecstasy —ay, and madness. They caught the preaching and proselytising craze which sometimes spreads to a whole nation, as it did thirty years ago in Sweden, when the public squares and country roads were filled with visionaries and prophetesses.

Pretty girls like Eline Ebsen were rare

amongst Madame Autheman's workwomen. Nearly all were old, sickly, or deformed; neglected spinsters; wretched wrecks of womanhood; happy enough to find a shelter in any port, and give God the love which had been scorned by man. This was, all things considered, the one good point in the Mission—which was utterly un-French, and would have been ludicrous, but for the heart-breakings and tears it too often had to answer for. Watson, the lighthouse man, saw nothing ludicrous in it, believe me, as he trimmed his lamp and sighed, 'Where is she to-night! What are the little ones doing?' Nor did it seem ludicrous to the hostess of the 'Famisher,' as she went about her noisy auberge in deep mourning, and sobbed over her cooking at the thought of her crazy husband and her dead child.

Poor little Damour, so good and sweet as she was, too! With her mother's unsuspecting consent she had been taken away to the schools by Madame Autheman, and thence removed to the Retreat. What with the sermons, the music, and the contemplation of death—for death was continually set before her, as a thing to hope for or to dread — she soon grew mortally wretched and wasted away. She was but a child, you see, and pined for the free, fresh country air. 'Let me go home,' she said. 'I am sick of this life.' But Anne de Beuil scolded and threatened her, and forbade her to stir

from the building. Not long after, the neophyte fell into a singular state of weakness, interrupted by violent nervous attacks, and visions, in which she saw the mysteries of heaven and hell, the tortures of the damned and the joy of the elect. These visions alternately filled her soul with bliss ecstatic and overwhelmed her with terror. She preached and prophesied, this peasant girl; and often, rising bolt upright in bed, her emaciated frame seemed convulsed by internal pain, and she shrieked so loudly that you heard her all over the park. 'I used to stand outside and listen,' said the unhappy mother afterwards. For under the pretext that excitement would be dangerous for the child, they contrived to keep her mother away from her, until, at last, she was unable to recognise any one. The agony had begun, mute and spasmodic, as in cases of tetanus—teeth tightly clenched—pupils extraordinarily dilated: symptoms which gave the doctor the clue to the mystery of his patient's death. 'Doubtless she had mistaken the berries of the deadly nightshades in the park for cherries,' said the doctor.

'As if my child didn't know a deadly nightshade when she saw one!' cried the distracted mother.

And, in spite of the doctor's dictum and the able report which was subsequently drawn up by the Corbeil Procureur, she persisted in believing that in trying to

make a visionary of her daughter, they had drugged her to death. This was, indeed, the general opinion in the neighbourhood, and ever since that time an evil reputation had clung to the châlet, of which, in winter, the peasants got distant glimpses through the trees.

No gloomy shadow darkened the Retreat that glorious, silent summer afternoon, however. As it stood there in the middle of the lawn, in the warm sunshine, it produced a strange impression of sweetness, rest, and light upon Eline. Above all, sweetness. Faint echoes of women's voices in prayer fell upon her ear, mingled with the low strains of an organ, the shrill chirp of the grasshoppers, and the hum of the gnats careering in the air. . . . A little hunch-backed girl was standing outside the door, noiselessly sweeping the steps.

'It's Chalmette,' said Jeanne, beckoning to the 'workwoman' to come to her.

Chalmette had just returned from Le Creuzot, where she had had a very hard time of it. The miners came to her meetings in regular gangs, but they brought bottles of wine, and herrings, with them; scoffed at her; and drowned her voice in the 'Marseillaise,' when she began to preach. The women were even more cruel, for they insulted her in the streets, and heaved bits of coal and cinders at her, without the slightest

pity for her deformity. Yet she was ready to brave it all again.

'Whenever you wish,' she murmured. 'I am ready.' The voice was very soft; but in the delicate face, the pointed chin, and the long nervous hands which grasped the broom-handle, you read resolution and will.

'They are all like her,' said Madame Autheman, as, ascending the wooden staircase, she bade Eline take a seat beside her under the verandah. 'All. But, alas! there are only twenty of them, and I should need thousands to redeem the world!'

Then, growing enthusiastic over her dream of universal redemption, she explained the end and principle of the Mission to Eline, and told her of her wish to widen its field of operations. So far they had kept to France, but they meant to extend their labours to other countries—for instance, England, Germany, and Switzerland, where Liberal Religion was sure of a welcome. Watson, she said, had left already, and others were to follow her.

She stopped, fearing she had said too much; but Eline had not been listening. The decisive moment had come, and she was quite wrapped in her own thoughts. Her heart seemed full of a lofty and ineffable joy which soothed and yet intoxicated her. In front of the verandah stood a willow-tree, and on the topmost branch a bird sat singing. That bird seemed to be her soul!

'You have made up your mind, then? Quite made up your mind?' said Madame Autheman, taking her by the hand.

'. . . You followed my advice. . . . About the child's taking the communion? . . . That was right. Quite right. . . . Of course his father could not consent to that . . . and you have not answered his letters . . . or given Fanny any lessons since? . . . You did wisely.'

But the tears came into Eline's eyes again, as she told her how she had fought against Satan's temptations, and refused to listen to the beseeching cries of her darling.

'I loved her as my own child! you cannot tell how much, how dear she was to me,' said Eline. 'Oh, the sacrifice was hard—hard!'

'Sacrifice?' sternly answered the Evangelist. 'Christ will ask other and more terrible sacrifice of you, child!'

Eline bowed her head, and trembled at the sound of that pitiless voice. Nor did she dare to ask what more Christ could exact of her.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ABDUCTION.

'JUST in time! Here comes the train!' exclaimed Madame Ebsen, as she stopped outside the arrival platform at the Gare

d'Orleans, panting for breath, and holding a dry pair of socks wrapped up in a newspaper, at the very moment the six o'clock train steamed into the station.

While she had been quietly going about the house getting dinner ready, a violent storm, the last Paris was likely to see that summer, had suddenly burst over the city; and, feeling very anxious about her daughter, who had gone away to Port-Sauveur in a light dress and thin boots that morning, she had taken the first omnibus to the station. And now she stood in the waiting-room, looking through the railings for her Eline, hoping to see her fair hair appear in the crowd of hurrying, scurrying people, with baskets in their hands and damp overcoats on their backs, who were excitedly pouring out to where the carriages stood, and noisily requesting each other to 'Take the dog!' or 'Hold the baby!'

Look though she would, however, there was no sign of Eline's black bonnet. At last every one left the platform but the one solitary custom-house officer at the gate, and you saw only the glistening line of empty carriages. She was not much alarmed at first. No doubt the rain had detained Eline, she thought, and she would come on by the eight o'clock train. It would be rather late, to be sure, but it could not be helped, as she knew that the express—which was then nearly due—did not stop at Ablon; and so,

resolving to make the best of it, she began walking up and down the deserted waiting-room. The gas had just been lighted, but the gusty wind was doing its best to blow it out again, and it threw but a flickering reflection on the damp platform. Presently a whistle announced the arrival of the express, and for a moment the station was again filled with the sound of tramping feet and rolling trucks. After that she heard nothing but the echo of her own slow steps, and the patter of the rain on the roof; except when one of the railway officials, in the little glass cages used as offices, turned over the leaves of a book, or blew his nose very loudly.

It was dismal enough to have to wait there with cold feet and an empty stomach, but Madame Ebsen consoled herself by thinking of the hot mulled ale they would have together when they got back to their snug little room. And it would soon be eight o'clock.

Eight o'clock. The train glided in, and the fussy whistles began to blow again. Then the doors were opened and the passengers streamed out. But Eline was not amongst them!

They must have kept her at the Château for the night, thought Madame Ebsen. She would find a telegram waiting for her when she got home. Well, it was not very considerate of Madame Autheman,

knowing, as she did, how tenderly united she and her daughter were. 'Eline ought not to have let them persuade her to stop there,' muttered the poor woman, as she picked her way through the puddles in the long avenues of high, untenanted houses leading to the Val-de-Grâce — monotonous, new houses, with five empty stories of stone and mortar atop of each other, and rows of black holes for windows.

'Has a telegram come for me, Madame Blot?' she asked, as soon as she saw the concierge.

'No, ma'am; nothing but the newspaper,' replied Madame Blot. 'How is it you're alone to-night?'

She was too terrified and tired to answer the question. Eline must be ill . . . and yet, if the people at the Château had the least feeling in them, surely they would have let her know . . . Well, it was no use to think of tramping about the country on a night like this . . . It would be best to wait till next morning.

The evening wore on; how sadly! The night of Grandmother's funeral had hardly been sadder, and then she had had Eline to help her to bear the dreadful void and grief the parting left behind it. Now she sat alone—alone with her grief and anxiety.

There was no light at Lorie's window. Since he had sent Sylvanire and the children to the Lock the poor man had taken to

coming home very late at night to avoid the pain of being near Eline, who never answered his letters now, even when they promised that he would submit and embrace the orthodox faith with his children, as she wished. Madame Ebsen had not been down to see him for at least two months, and in her distress she felt remorseful at the thought that she had left him to suffer from Eline's cruel caprice alone all that time; for nothing quickens one's sympathy like suffering.

She sat up all night, with the lamp burning, counting the weary hours and listening in vain for the sound of carriage wheels at the door. With the common superstition of watchers she said to herself, 'The third carriage that passes will stop at our house.' But the third passed, and many others, bringing no Eline. Dawn came, and the milk carts began to rattle over the pavement. Still no Eline. At last she fell back in the arm-chair, utterly exhausted, and slept, as people sleep after a death-watch, with her mouth wide open and her eyes swollen like a drunkard's.

She was awakened by a loud ring at the bell and Madame Blot's voice shouting to her:

'Ma'am Ebsen! Ma'am Ebsen! Here's something just come for you. I think it's from your daughter!'

In the pale morning light which streamed

into the room she hurried to the door and picked up a letter. It was from Eline. She could not be ill then. What could it mean?

It meant this.

'Dear Mother,—

Fearing to afflict you, I had till now shrunk from executing a plan long since formed in my heart. But the hour has come. God calls me, and I must obey His voice. When this letter reaches you I shall be far away. How long we may be parted—how long our time of trial may last—I know not; but I shall let you hear from me often, and shall find some way of getting your letters forwarded to me. You may be sure that I shall never forget you, and I will entreat the All-merciful Saviour to give you His peace according to His loving word.

'Ever your affectionate daughter,

'ELINE EBSEN.'

At first she did not understand it all, though she read it out again and again, phrase by phrase, from beginning to end. 'Eline.' . . . 'Eline Ebsen.' . . . It was her child, her very child, her Lina, had written it. . . . And yet it could not be. . . . The writing was very like her daughter's, too, though not so firm. . . . Those mad women must have held her hand and dictated the unnatural words. . . . Where had the letter

come from? . . . The postmark on the envelope said Petit-Port. Eline was there still then, and if her mother lost no time in going to her, she might induce her to abandon her dreadful purpose. It was a cruel thing to try and carry off her darling. . . . This Madame Autheman seemed to make a business of breaking hearts. . . . But just let her wait; she would be even with her.

She was getting ready to start while she uttered all these angry exclamations. In a few minutes she had hastily done her hair and washed the traces of her tears. When she had taken her ticket and was seated in the train, she grew calmer, and quietly reviewed in her mind all the insidious perfidy by which her daughter had been gradually alienated from her. She recalled Anne de Beuil's first visit, and the curious inquiries she had made amongst their acquaintances in Paris—no doubt in the hope of finding out whether there was any risk in what they meditated. Then in fancy she again attended that meeting, and saw Eline on the platform beside that—that mad woman—the wretch! She remembered the very words Madame Autheman had spoken when she had come to engage Eline for her schools, 'You are very much attached to your child, Madame?' and the cold, treacherous tones in which her shapely lips had uttered them.

How could she have failed to see it all long since! How weak and blind she had

been! Yes, it was all her fault. Eline had cared no more at first for translating the crazy, religious stuff with which her soul had been slowly poisoned, than she had for the prayer meeting they attended that night. It was she—her mother—who had brought it all about by her vanity, and selfish desire to be brought into relations with the wealthy Authemans. Oh, fool that she had been! she thought, mentally cursing herself for her folly.

Ablon!

She hardly knew the station again, or remembered the pleasant excursion they had made there in the spring; for places change with the changes in our own minds, and our own eyes colour the landscapes that we look at. All she could recollect was that Eline took the Port-Sauveur omnibus at the station. On making inquiries she found, however, that no omnibus came to meet this particular train, and she had to take a cross road which they showed her. It was only half an hour's walk to the Château. The weather was mild and autumnal. The storm of the night before had soaked the ground, and a white mist hung over the fields, waiting for the noonday sun to turn it into rain or disperse it. She skirted the boundary walls of several estates, every now and then passing a lofty iron gate, through which you saw green lawns, and beds of flowers, and orange-trees stiffly ranged in rows in front of

stone steps. Summer seemed to have been caught unawares overnight, and shivered in the fog like the Parisiennes who had been overtaken by the rain in their light summer dresses.

Before she had gone far, Madame Ebsen found herself in the open country, amidst the vines and the beetroot, where the rooks were wheeling over the wide ploughed fields, and the men and women whom she dimly saw in the distance looked like shadows, as they dug up the potatoes.

The mother was affected by the sadness of earth and sky as though by some physical oppression. As she drew near the red roofs and waving woods of Port-Sauveur her melancholy grew still deeper. She walked on past what seemed to her the interminable boundary wall of a park full of luxuriant ivy and purple Virginia creeper, crossed the line, and reached the river banks in front of the Château. A long, low mansion, with a grassy lawn, surrounded by chains, before it, and stately gates, through which she peered eagerly, hoping to see something that her eyes longed for, besides the leafy tree-tops. Yes, this was the place.

She rang once, gently; then again, louder; and while she waited for the gate to open, got ready a short, polite speech she had been revolving. But when it opened, she forgot every word of it, and rushed in breathless, exclaiming, 'My child! Where

is my child? Bring her to me—at once! at once!'

The valet, who wore an apron, and had the silver letters P.S. embroidered on his black cloth coat-collar, replied, as he had been instructed to, that Mademoiselle Eline had left the Château the night before. On seeing Madame Ebsen's gesture of fierce incredulity, however, he added, 'Madame is in, if you wish to see her.'

She followed him across the garden, and up some steps, without seeing anything she passed, and was ushered into a little green room in which Madame Autheman was sitting erect at a desk, writing. At the sight of the familiar face, and the dignified yet gentle smile, her anger cooled. 'Oh, Madame! where is Lina? What does that letter mean?' she exclaimed, sobbing convulsively, till her sad, burly figure shook, and seemed as though it would collapse.

Thinking she would have little difficulty in soothing her tearful affliction, Madame Autheman softly bade her sit down beside her on the sofa, and told her it was wrong to grieve so. She should glorify the Lord, and be glad, for He had deigned to enlighten her child, and save her soul from the burning. Her mystic balm, however, far from healing, acted like a red-hot iron upon the torn, bleeding, human heart on which it was spread. The mother sprang to her feet,

and, glaring at her with wild, tearless eyes, exclaimed:

'Idle words! My child! Give me my child!'

'She is not here,' said Madame Autheman, sighing at the lamentable profanity of her rebellious visitor.

'Where is she, then? I insist on knowing where my daughter is!' said Madame Ebsen.

The Lady President, who was used to scenes of this kind, quietly answered that Eline had left France, intending to spread the Gospel. She might at that moment be in England or in Switzerland. That was all she knew of her. She might rest assured that she would soon have news, for Eline was, as she had always been, a Christian and devoted daughter.

It was Eline's letter, almost word for word. The phrases fell from the Evangelist's lips slowly, serenely, gently, driving Madame Ebsen well-nigh mad with rage. She felt a desperate impulse to strangle this neat, imperturbable woman with the thin, pale face (paler than ever by contrast with the black dress beneath it), and the prominent forehead, and the cold, limpid eyes, in which you read no trace of womanly pity or tenderness. 'I could murder her,' she thought; but next instant her twitching hands were folded imploringly, and she was saying:

'Madame Autheman, give me back my

little Lina. She is all I have in the world. If she leaves me I shall have nothing to live for. Oh, God! we were so happy together. You should have seen us in our little home, our dear little home. . . .' Her sobs nearly choked her, and she had to stop. All she asked was to be allowed to have one interview with her Lina, and if it was really true, if Lina told her it was true, she promised she would go away and submit.

An interview! It was the very thing Jeanne was determined not to allow. No. She found it suited her better to comfort the mother with pious texts and extracts from her little religious pamphlets, 'Christ the Comforter,' and 'Sorrow inclines the Heart to Prayer.' She warmed as she went on with her impromptu sermon, and exclaimed, 'Unhappy woman! do you not know that it is your soul Eline is working to redeem? Your affliction is the first step to your salvation.'

Madame Ebsen listened to her with downcast eyes, steeling her heart and mind against the preacher. Suddenly she interrupted her, speaking firmly and decisively:

'Very well. If you will not give me back my Lina, I shall see what the law will do for me.'

Her threat did not ruffle Madame Autheman's tranquillity. She accompanied her visitor to the steps, and there stood majestic, passionless as Fate, while the servant showed

her out. Before she left, the mother turned and stopped. Here, in this very spot, her daughter had perhaps walked that morning. She took in the whole scene at a glance—the great, still park, and the white cross that rose above the trees and the fog, like the top of a mausoleum. Oh, how she longed to rush into that wood—to dash open the portals of the tomb which, perhaps, hid her child, and, crying 'Lina! Lina!' to rescue her, and carry her far away from death, to life, and the living world! It all flashed across her brain in an instant; but shame restrained her. The grandeur and luxury she saw about her disarmed and overawed her. But the law would help her.

She walked on resolutely to the village, turning her simple plan over in her mind. She would go straight to the Mayor, lay the case before him, and return with a gendarme or a garde-champêtre, who would force that wicked woman to tell her where her child was. That any difficulty would stop her never entered her thoughts for a moment. Nay, so certain was she of success, that, though she had wept and prayed, she even asked herself whether, had she been more conciliating, she might not have avoided giving rise to scandal. Well, it could not be helped. So much the worse for the child-stealer.

There was not a sound in the one street the village boasted. Nothing stirred in the

stiff rows of cottages that climbed the slope, or the little square gardens in front of them. Every one seemed to be at work in the fields, for it was harvest time. Now and then a curtain was drawn back from a window, or a dog sniffed as the stranger passed by. But the curtain fell into the old place again, and never a dog barked. A mournful prison-like silence everywhere. At the top of the street, in an open place shaded by clustering elms, rose the Protestant church, between the two Evangelical schools, gleaming white against the dull grey of the clouds.

Madame Ebsen stopped in front of the girls' school to listen to the children's voices that were mechanically repeating—

'The—voice—of—the—Lord—is—pow-er-ful—the voice—of—the—Lord—is—full—of—majesty,'

droning out the verses in a monotonous sing-song, without once pausing to take breath—obedient to tap, fast or slow, of a rule on a desk.

Why should she not go in? It was here Eline had taught. She might hear something about her. Who knew whether she might not find her quietly teaching her class!

She pushed the door open and entered. Before her was a room with whitewashed walls covered with texts. Long rows of little peasant girls, in black blouses and skull-caps, were bent over the desks in front of them; and, at the end of the room, a tall, pale,

puffy-faced girl was acting as fugleman, with a ruler in one hand and a Bible in the other. On seeing Madame Ebsen enter, she interrupted the reading, and went to meet her, while all the tiny heads turned inquisitively to watch her.

'I am Eline's mother,' said Madame Ebsen; 'for pity's sake, Mademoiselle, tell me——'

'Go on!' cried Mademoiselle Hammer, in dismay, as loudly as her meek voice would let her. And at the command the whole class began droning out another verse of the Psalm.

The poor Mademoiselle Hammer must indeed have been excited, for, without more ado, she hustled Madame Ebsen out of the room, dolefully replying, 'Yes! yes!' to all her questions; a yes, yes that seemed to express the despair and shame she felt (though so many thousand years had elapsed) for that melancholy adventure of Adam and Eve's under the apple-tree.

'You know my daughter?'

'Yes, yes!'

'Is this the room she taught in?'

'Yes, yes!'

'Has she really gone away? Tell me, for pity's sake.'

'Yes, yes! . . . but I mustn't say anything. . . . They'll tell you at the Château.'

With that the timid creature (who, for all her timidity, had the strength of a gendarme

in her wrist), pushed Madame Ebsen into the street, closed the door, and returned to her class, which was now vociferously proclaiming that—

'The—voice—of—the—Lord—shaketh—the—wilderness—the—Lord—shaketh—the—wilderness—of Kadesh.'

Just across the place was the Mairie, on the grey walls of which were painted the letters R.F. Madame Autheman had not yet had the courage to replace them by her own P.S. A ponderous man, with a face like a beadle's, was writing in a room on the ground-floor. He was only the Mayor's secretary, though, and Madame Ebsen wished to see the Mayor.

'He's not in,' said the man, without even looking up as he spoke. 'If you want him he can be found at the Château every evening between six and seven.'

'At the Château?' she exclaimed. 'Then the Mayor must be M. ——.'

'Yes; Monsieur Autheman.'

She would get no redress here then.

Next she bethought herself of the curé, who was no doubt Madame Autheman's enemy, and would be ready to help and advise her. She asked her way to his house, and returned, as fast as her legs would carry her, to the waterside. As she was going along, she saw some men harnessing the horses to a rustic omnibus in front of a house

on which were painted the words, *Omnibuses to the trains. Carriages let out.* She went up to the conductor, and, slipping a piece of silver into his hand to refresh his memory, asked him if he knew a tall, beautiful, fair girl, who always wore mourning. 'Know her, indeed; I should think so!' answered the peasant. 'I drive her to the station and back three times a week.'

'Did you drive her there yesterday or this morning?' anxiously asked Madame Ebsen. 'Pray try to remember. She is my daughter — they've taken her from me!'

The man's memory became muddled directly she had made the unlucky speech. Why, he didn't rightly know whether he had taken her down yesterday. But no doubt they would tell her at the Château. . . . The Château stared her in the face at every turn; and ere long the long, grey house grew and grew in the eyes of this most sorrowful mother, till it seemed one of those mighty feudal prisons which darkened a whole country side with the shadows of their towers and battlements.

The presbytery stood on the bank of the river, close to a tiny creek, in which several women were busily washing their linen. The boats that were moored at the foot of the steps leading up to it, and the great nets stretched out on poles in the garden to dry, made it look like a fisherman's cottage. The

frank, hearty manner, and big, red, childlike face of the curé, gave one confidence in him at once. Seeing a respectably dressed visitor at his door, he asked her to step into the parlour.

'I am an unhappy mother, M. le Curé, who needs help and counsel,' said Madame Ebsen, much to the poor priest's dismay; for he fancied she was asking for money, and he had not a sou in his purse to give her. But this was nothing to his consternation when she went on to inform him that Madame Autheman had stolen away her daughter.

Not noticing how indifferent and cold the curé's jolly face had become, she began her story. Before she had gone far, however, the priest, who had a lively recollection of the remark made by his bishop, and the misadventures of Sister Octavie, interrupted her.

'I beg your pardon, madam,' said he. 'You are a Protestant. How can I interfere in the matter? Your own ministers would doubtless be the proper people to apply to.'

He did not think it worth while to espouse a dangerous quarrel to oblige a mere stranger.

'Oh, M. le Curé!' exclaimed Madame Ebsen, 'surely this is a matter of common humanity—not religion. It's a woman—a mother—that appeals to you. You cannot—no, you cannot refuse to help her!'

He saw that he had been too harsh, and did his best to soften his refusal. It was a pitiful tale, he admitted. Oh, yes, he admitted that. Her tears were sufficient proof that she was not deceiving him. Unquestionably a certain person (there was no need to mention names, of course) brought a blind and reprehensible zeal to the service of her religious convictions. He himself, indeed, had been the first to suffer from it. . . . For that matter, though, women were unreasonable and over-zealous in all churches. Catholic priests could tell her strange stories. There were numbers of morbid women fussing about even in Catholic churches, and on some pretence or other meddling in ecclesiastical affairs. But they had means of quieting their excited nerves which Protestant ministers, having less authority, of course lacked. . . . What could you expect, though, in a church which encouraged free thought and despised discipline—a church which was open to anybody, and which allowed every one not only to believe what he pleased, but to play the priest, too, if he had a mind for it?

'Look at the hopeless confusion of sects and creeds!' he continued, warming as he spoke, for he had many an old score to settle with Luther and Calvin. Besides, he was proud to show off his erudition. He had had plenty of time for studying this particular subject lately, and knew all about

the innumerable sects into which, to say nothing of the great quarrel between the Liberal and the Orthodox parties, the Reformed Church was split up.

'Let us count them,' said he, ticking them off one by one on his big, blistered fingers. 'We have the Irvingites, who call for a return to the simplicity of the Primitive Church; the Sabbatarians, the Methodists, the Wesleyans, the Mormons, the Anabaptists, the Quakers, the Shakers, and Heaven knows how many more!'

The poor woman listened to him open-mouthed, and, as though she saw every one of these sects standing between her and her daughter, she put her hand to her eyes and sobbed, 'My child! my child!' so pitifully that the priest was touched, and threw aside his caution.

'After all, Madame,' said he, 'there are laws to protect you. Go to Corbeil, and make a formal complaint to the tribunal. You have a formidable adversary, to be sure, and I remember a very similar case—but that was in the time of the 16th of May people. . . . No doubt you will be more fortunate now that we have a sincerely Republican Government over us,' he added, getting quite good-humoured again, as he shot his innocent little shaft at the Republic.

'Is it far to Corbeil?' said the mother, abruptly.

No, it was not far to Corbeil. She had only to follow the river as far as Juvisy, and the train would take her there in twenty minutes.

And now she was once more tramping along in the mist, towards a group of white houses in the distance beyond a bend in the river. Water and trees seemed blended and blurred in the foggy morning. Here and there she came upon a shadowy fisherman in a shadowy punt. A hush of expectation and anguish filled the air; and the mother, who had eaten nothing since the night before, grew fainter and fainter as she toiled tearfully on along the lonely, grassy, slippery towing-path.

Her vagrant thoughts, which would run on before her, wearied her even more than the actual walk. Ten times, at least, she pictured herself telling her story to the Procureur, and listening to his answer. Then, all at once, as she stumbled through the mire, in search of the gendarmes who were to give her back her daughter, a terrible feeling of discouragement crept over her. Of what avail were judges and soldiers if her child no longer loved her? 'God calls me. . . . I must obey His voice. . . . Your affectionate daughter,' she murmured, half unconsciously, repeating the words of the dreadful letter over which she had already so often wept. Lina! Her affectionate

daughter! Oh, God, could such things be!

While she thought of Eline's ingratitude, all that she had done for her came back to her mind. How she had worked and slaved to give her all she needed. She had gone in rags and patches herself to give her child a young lady's education, and now—now that she was grown so pretty and clever, she had abandoned her. God called her, and she had obeyed His voice.

Her legs bent under her, and she had to sit down by the riverside, on a heap of stones, close to a plank which ran down into the water, and served as a stool for her wet feet to rest upon. Tempting though the smooth, damp plank looked, it suggested no way out of her weariness and despair to her; for one fixed, terrible idea possessed her soul. What if the woman had spoken truth, and God had really robbed her of her child! This Jeanne Autheman, after all, was not a witch, and only something supernatural could have turned the head of a great girl of twenty like her Eline. Scraps of texts she had heard at church flashed across her brain, and seemed to scorch it like flames of fire. 'Love not' . . . and 'every one that hath forsaken houses or . . . father or mother . . . for my name's sake.' . . . How could she fight against God? How could the law or the Corbeil magistrates prevail over God?

She sank back on the stones, staring vaguely at the river rolling its thick and heavy waters on to the sea. Everything seethed and boiled in her poor head. She heard a singing in her ears, and a dull hissing sound as of an overflowing cauldron. It came on to rain—a fine, drizzling, penetrating rain that blurred the sky and the landscape. She tried to rise and continue her journey; but her head went round. River, and trees, and sky grew dark and confused; and, closing her eyes, she fell upon the soft, wet earth—motionless.

CHAPTER XII.

ROMAIN AND SYLVANIRE.

STILL the same seething and boiling; but louder and nearer now. Yet her head seemed clear, and the singing in her ears had ceased. She opened her eyes and wondered that she saw no sign of the river banks or the heap of stones. How came she to be lying on this great bed with the yellow curtains? And what was this room in which the sunlight, streaming through the windows, danced up and down upon the ceiling? Surely she knew that carpet with the pink roses, and those cheap coloured prints on the walls? Yes, there could be

no doubt of it; or if a doubt still lingered in her mind, it was dispersed when she heard a whistle outside the window, and a shout of 'Romain! Romain!' rising above the murmur of the foaming stream. Surely, too, that little girl in the peasant's frock, who stood watching her in the doorway, must be Fanny, and that was Fanny's voice crying, 'Sylvanire, she's awake!'

They were both by her bedside now, Sylvanire and Fanny. It did the poor mother good to see that honest face near her, and feel the child's silky hair against her cheek. What could have happened, though? What had brought her here?

Sylvanire could not enlighten her much upon the subject. All she knew was that Maurice had found her the day before lying lifeless on the towing-path. Apoplexy, the doctor from Ablon had called it. He had bled her twice, and had seen at once from the way the blood gushed out that she would soon be well again. 'For all that, though,' said Sylvanire, 'I thought I would telegraph to Mademoiselle Eline. We have the telegraph in the house, you know.'

Romain's wife stopped in dismay, for Madame Ebsen had buried her pale face in the pillow and was crying bitterly. Eline's name had revived her anguish, and the short respite her sick brain had given her had doubled her despair.

'Eline has gone!' she exclaimed between

her sobs; 'gone . . . Madame Authemman . . .'

Sylvanire understood her at once, and was not astonished. 'It's not the first time the lady at Port-Sauveur has done the same thing,' said she. 'She's turned Mademoiselle Eline's head in the same way as she did that of Damour's little girl and Gélinot's. She's given her one of those draughts to drink, I'll be bound.'

'Draughts? Do you think so?' said the mother, who would have been only too glad to believe in a story which gave her a hope of bringing home a punishable crime to the Authemans.

'Why, of course I do,' said Sylvanire. 'But don't you lose heart, Madame Ebsen; you'll get your daughter back one of these days. It's no use trying to get the law of them down here; the Authemans do just as they like in this neighbourhood. You must go to Paris and get friends to back you. Monsieur knows some of the Ministers—perhaps he could speak to them about it. There, there, don't take on like that, ma'am; you'll have justice yet.'

The simple creature's cheerful tone and talk put new life and courage into her. She resolved to appeal to her friends, many of whom were rich and influential. Perhaps Madame d'Arlot could help her, or the Baroness. She would go to them all, and stir them up against that wicked woman,

Had not Sylvanire prevented her, she would have got out of bed and started that very moment. But that was not to be thought of. The doctor had left strict orders that she was to keep perfectly quiet for a few days, or she would have a relapse. Well, well, for her child's sake she would be prudent.

But how long that convalescence seemed! How hard it seemed to lie in that room at the Lock, counting the hours, and watching the barges go sleepily by at regular intervals, and the rafts drifting lazily down the stream, steered by the pilots with the long oars and the cotton nightcaps! At nightfall red lights glowed at the bows of the barges, casting bright reflections in the water. She watched the boats float down the river till the lights went out, and followed them in fancy long after they had vanished in the evening mist, saying to herself, 'Now they are at Ablon. . . . Now they are at Port à l'Anglais. . . . Now they are in Paris.' The feverish activity of her mind made their monotonous regularity exasperating to her; for they seemed to mock her weakness. She grudged every hour's delay, but there was no helping it. So many days more had to be spent in bed, so many more on the sofa. Then she would have to get a little used to walking again, and then, ah! then, they would let her start for Paris. She was as eager and excited as a prisoner who sees the hour of his release approaching.

And yet they were very kind to her at the Lock. Romain had not sung or laughed once for fear of disturbing her, though he was running over with joy at having his wife all to himself at last. Before he entered the sick-room to give the poor mother those huge nosegays of flags and waterlilies he was so clever at making, he invariably stopped outside the door for a moment to tone his mind down to a becoming point of sadness by thinking of something dismal. For instance, he would make believe that Sylvanire had been taken ill, or that Monsieur had sent for her to come back directly with the children. But the poor success of his well-meant hypocrisy, and the snuffling half-heartedness of the '*Cré cochon*, Madame Ebsen!' with which he tried to show his sympathy, embarrassed and annoyed Sylvanire so much that she generally bundled him out again very quickly, to let off his superfluous and selfish joy in the open air at the Lock.

She was least unhappy when she was alone with little Fanny. The child brought her work into the room every morning, and talked to her of Eline for hours together. 'You were very fond of her, Pet, weren't you?' the mother would say. 'You would have liked to have her for a mamma?' It seemed to her that her daughter's kisses still lingered on the child's soft cheek, and that the touch of Eline's hand had but just

then smoothed her glossy locks. Sometimes, however, as she saw how changed Fanny looked, how red her little hands had become, how coarsely she was clad, she felt regretful and sad, as one might do at the sight of moral and physical degradation.

The change was even more marked in Maurice. Of the gallant sailor-boy, who had been made so much of in the Sous-préfecture saloons, nothing remained but a ragged cap atop of a dull, clumsy, country clown. He was still training for the naval school, but, as he had to prepare for his first Communion, he had temporarily discontinued his studies, and, when not conning over his Catechism, passed the time in long and delightful rambles along the river, where nothing troubled him but the youthful Nicolas, whose greatest pleasure it was to chevy him whenever he saw him coming away from the curé's. Oh, that Nicolas! The wretched boy dreamt of him by night, and told terrible tales of him by day to his little sister, who got highly indignant at finding her brother such a coward. And some day he would be an officer!

'If I were in your place, you'd see!' she used to say.

Every one at the Lock was full of these dreadful adventures of Maurice's.

'It will be a bad look-out for him if I ever catch him!' said Sylvanire. Fortunately for the youthful Nicolas, however, she rarely

found time to leave the house. There was the telegraph to be attended to (for Romain had taught her how to use the apparatus), and the cooking, and the washing of her husband's linen and the children's, to say nothing of Baraquin's. The old renegade formed part of the household, slept with them, and took his meals with them, much to their discomfort, for they could not very well talk of the Château or Eline when he was by. Not that Baraquin was a bad fellow; but for a drop of brandy he would have sold his friends, his body and his soul, with no more compunction than if he had been pawning a Communion coat. So Sylvanire distrusted him, and said little till he was out of the way.

Sylvanire had got it into her head that Mademoiselle Eline had not left the Château, and Romain was sent off in the boat to watch the park gates every day, while she herself made discreet inquiries at the Evangelical butcher's and grocer's about the pretty young lady. No one had seen the pretty young lady, but they all knew well enough whom Sylvanire was in search of. As to asking them to take her a letter or a message, you might as well have asked them to tell you their opinions on politics, or to say for whom they meant to vote at the next election. A wink, or a chuckle, or a vacant stare was all the answer you could hope to get in either case.

One evening Mother Damour came round to the Lock for a few minutes. The woman's sinister look, and the brutish resignation with which she spoke of her misfortunes, terrified Madame Ebsen.

'You'll be wasting your time, trying to punish them,' said the hostess of the 'Famisher' in a dreary voice, as she sat in the cottage with her hands stretched out flat on her knees. 'The Authemans killed my girl, and shut my good man up in a madhouse; but, bless you, I could get no redress. They're too rich! As I said to the judge (he nearly sent me to gaol for saying so), there's no law as can touch people like that!'

Romain did all he could to explain that Madame Ebsen's case was very different from hers, and that she would have powerful friends—Ministers and police commissioners—to aid her; but it was no good. Mother Damour's opinion was not to be shaken. 'It's no good,' she doggedly replied; 'you're wasting your time; they're too rich.'

They did not let her in any more after that.

At the end of a week or so Madame Ebsen was well enough to go out. Soon after she left the Lock and returned to Paris, burning to begin her task.

Sylvanire was not mistaken. Eline was

still at the Retreat, preparing for her Mission under Madame Autheman's supervision, isolated from the dangerous influence and temptations of all worldly ties. She was not left alone or idle for a moment. No sooner had she done with J.-B. Crouzat and his theology, than there came one of Jeanne's sermons, some hymn-singing or prayer-meeting, with an occasional meditation by way of variety, or a walk with Anne de Beuil or Chalmette, whose fervid zeal made a great impression on her.

These walks did not often extend beyond the balcony of the châlet, where they were sheltered from the autumn showers which had begun to thin the decaying leaves in the park, and compelled the five or six workwomen at the Retreat to take to their travelling waterproofs; so adding another touch of sadness to the melancholy of the woods. The neophyte's happiest hours were spent in the prayer-hall on the ground-floor, which was darkened by the projecting balcony above. There, lulled to rest by the monotonous sound of the hymns, she yielded to the delicious slumber which stole over her, and, gradually weakening her head, brought on (though she did not know it) slight attacks of vertigo.

They prepared themselves for prayer by a short meditation, during which they knelt with their foreheads pressed against the wall, till their frames grew motionless and rigid.

The postures they assumed were of the most different kinds. Some held themselves bolt upright; some collapsed on the floor; and others, by an extraordinary effort of the will, bent themselves almost double. And they were all so still, you would have almost fancied no human beings were hidden in those shapeless bundles.

As soon as one of them felt ready and inspired, she rose suddenly, walked to the Communion-table, and standing up, with her whole body racked and trembling, improvised a prayer. There were more cries and ejaculations than connected phrases in it, as a rule; and there was a strange sameness about the appeals they made to God. 'Jesus! Jesus! Blessed Saviour! Dear, well-beloved Jesus! Glory! Glory! Help me! Have pity on my soul!' were constantly recurring. But with it all there was a fervour and a spontaneous flow in these improvisations which no prayers learnt by heart ever have, and the words uttered seemed to acquire new meanings, and were transfigured as in a luminous and glorious dream.

At such times Eline forgot all her misery —all the horrible pain she had suffered in wrenching herself from her home affections. Absorbed in God, all other loves seemed lost in one immense love. Her voice trembled with passion, changed, grew more winning and powerful. Her sweet, childish face became excited as she spoke. Voluptuous

circles formed about her eyes; and the flooding tears she shed, though they took the delicate pink flush and bloom from her cheek, regenerated her, as she thought, in a new baptism, and washed away her sins.

The other workwomen (peasant girls for the most part, refined by hysteria) felt the same ravishment during their improvisations. But the ecstatic *raptus* did not make them all beautiful as it did Eline. The little hunchback was fearful to look upon when she prayed. Her eyes grew wild and fixed, her misshapen body was convulsed by spasmodic tremblings, and her great, open mouth was all distorted as it called, or, rather, howled and groaned, to Jesus. She was a genuine hysteric subject; for hysteria affects all sects indifferently, as the histories of the revivals and camp-meetings in England and America can testify.

It was what is sometimes called the Revivalist disease. All the workwomen at Port-Sauveur were affected by it; Eline more dangerously than the rest, for her naturally nervous constitution had been excited beyond measure by the death of her Grandmother and Jeanne Autheman's method of proceeding. It was a real disease she had, with fits and intermittent moments of health. When she went back to the solitude of her little room at night, the girl felt her heart beat dutifully in the normal way. Try as she would to convince herself that the

separation from her mother was necessary for that mother's salvation—read as many pious verses as she would—do what she would to persuade herself that these trials which had come to her were bringing her nearer to Jesus—the recollection of the old peaceful days of natural affection would come back and hinder her in her prayers.

Oh, how terrible are the hours without faith or fervour—the martyrdom of so many earnest priests! Those hours in which icy words fall from hard, parched lips, and Saint Theresa, weeping at the foot of the Cross as she waits for the Divine Sacrifice to touch her heart, coldly counts the crimson wounds on the ivory.

At such moments Madame Ebsen often appeared to her daughter, stretching out her arms to her, and weeping, as she exclaimed:

'Come back, come back, my child, and let us be happy again together! What have I done that you should have forsaken me?'

With the strange clearness of vision one has at night in bed, Eline actually saw and heard her mother, and called to her in reply, sobbing; until, utterly worn out by the terrible struggle, she groped about for the potion which Anne de Beuil prepared for her every evening, and fell asleep till morning, incapable of thought, or will, or even tears. On the days which followed these experiences she remained in her cell, and spent long hours looking through the moist

window-panes at the dark waterproofs of the Mission workwomen who wandered about amongst the trees, waving their arms in ecstasy, and every now and then stopping still as though in a dream, like the patients you may see at the Salpétrière. The leaves whirled round and round in the dreary sky. The clouds gathered and regathered on the horizon, were dispersed, and descended in fine raindrops. She would sometimes watch one of them through its shifting from light to shadow—the very same one which, perhaps, her poor mother was then watching so close to her from her sick-room; and, more than once, looking at some distant aërial disturbance through the magnetic medium of thought and human atmosphere which is so potent in people who love each other, Eline had an intuition that her mother was near her.

One morning Madame Autheman found her weeping.

'What is wrong now?' said she, harshly.

'My mother is lying ill somewhere near us,' replied Eline.

'Who told you so?'

'I feel it,' said the girl.

Later on that day Madame Ebsen's presence at the Lock became known at the châlet. The Lady President took it for granted that Eline had heard of it from one of the servants (for none are so sceptical about the more delicate effects of these de-

rangements of the nervous system as your sincere, orthodox believers), and she knew that if once the mother and daughter met, there would be an end of her own influence.

'You must start, Ebsen,' said she. 'Are you ready?'

'I am ready,' answered poor Ebsen, in a voice which she tried hard to steady.

Her simple outfit was soon prepared—a poor governess's outfit, beside which the *trousseau* her mother had been preparing for her when she went about their home, collecting those odd bits of lace, would have seemed very grand. Several packets of Bibles and 'Morning Hours' fresh from the printers were hurriedly put in with her wardrobe. The horse was harnessed, while Ebsen embraced Madame Autheman, Mademoiselle Hammer, J.-B. Crouzat, and the rest of her companions, who now formed the only family she was to be allowed to have for the future. Anne de Beuil got into the carriage, and they departed.

Now go, my child, and labour in my vineyard.

The carriage had to turn the corner of the park wall very slowly, for the lane was narrow and steep. As they drove down, a little girl who was walking their way, with a basket in her hand, stood aside to let them pass, and, looking into the carriage, recognised Eline. They heard a loud cry of

'Mama!' to which a feebler cry, that ended like a sob, replied. But the driver lashed his horses, and they dashed away down the hill at a gallop. Still holding her basket in her hand, Fanny ran and ran as hard as her little legs would let her, to overtake them, calling to 'Mama! Mama!' Her heavy clothes and *sabots* soon compelled her to stop, however. She made one despairing effort, and fell flat on the ground. When she got up, with her hands all bleeding and her hair covered with mud (she did not weep though, and she still clutched the basket), the carriage had reached the top of the hill. The child stood still for a moment, gravely and silently watching it, while her forehead puckered as she strove to understand the meaning of it all. Then, as though a light had suddenly dawned upon her, and she had discovered some terrible thing, she rushed home headlong to the Lock.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOO RICH.

THE ground floor of the Hotel Gerspach, in the Rue Murillo. All the lackeys are ranged in a row in the hall, and the surly, pompous Suisse sits at his table replying, for the twentieth time at least that afternoon:

'Madame la Baronne is not receiving visitors to-day.'

'Is not this her reception day?'

Yes, to be sure it was her day; but a sudden indisposition——. At the word indisposition a smile flitted over the close-shaven faces of the lackeys; for the Baroness's periodic skin disease was a standing joke in the servants' hall.

'She will not mind seeing me,' said the visitor. 'Tell her it is Countess d'Arlot. I shall not detain her long.'

A muffled sound of bells followed, and a little polite commotion, after which, to the great astonishment of the lackeys (for Madame d'Arlot was not very intimate with the Baroness), orders were sent down to ask the visitor upstairs. Madame d'Arlot had to wait a few minutes longer, however, in the drawing-room on the first floor, which was warmed by the glowing embers of a huge log fire. Through the windows you saw the whole Parc Monceau, with its English lawns, and rockeries, and its little temple peeping through the bare trees. A chilly Paris winter landscape, which seemed all the sadder when you turned back to the handsome room, and admired the artistic bronzes, old china, lacquerwork, and motley hangings that were scattered about among the low Japanese screens at the windows, and the luxurious chairs drawn round the fire-place.

As Léonie examined the drawing-room,

she thought of the time when she, too, had been a woman of fashion, and had her reception days, like the Baroness. But that was long ago, before her husband had deserted her, and made her life purposeless. Now her husband was always at his club or in the Chamber, and she in her churches. She had quite given up visiting and receiving visits, nor would she have come to see her old schoolfellow Deborah to-day without a very powerful motive; for, much as she liked her, they lived in different worlds, and had rarely met since she had retired from society.

'Will Madame la Comtesse kindly step this way?' said a lady's maid.

She followed her into a darkened room with light hangings and drawn curtains.

'Come here,' said a querulous voice, that seemed to come from an immense canopied bed, on a raised däis. 'I would not have let any one else in, I assure you.'

When her eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, she discovered poor Deborah's auburn hair and her sallow Oriental face, which, like the beautiful arms which issued from her lace shoulder-straps, was covered with pomade. Round her was such a confusion of hand-mirrors, brushes, pencils, powder-puffs, and unguents, that you would have thought you were in some actress's dressing-room.

'It's no better than it was at school, you see,' said Deborah. 'I shall not be able to

go anywhere for a week because of these dreadful marks on my skin. . . . They came this morning, on my reception day, of all days in the week. . . . I really don't know what I shall do. I ought to go to that fancy fair to-morrow. . . . And there's that dress of mine waiting to be tried on at Veroust's. Oh, what an unfortunate creature I am!'

The tears which streamed down her cheeks as she spoke washed away part of the ointment she had just been putting on, and revealed the red spots on her face. They were not so dreadful, after all, though they seemed so very shocking to her womanly vanity. She had tried every cure she could think of, in vain. Louesche water, Pougues water, Saint-Amand mud, and Heaven knows what besides. 'Yes, my dear,' said she, 'I was up to my neck in warm black mud at Saint-Amand once for five hours, with water trickling all over my skin. . . . But it was no use; it's in the blood. . . . We have inherited it. . . . It's the Autheman gold coming out, I suppose, as that horrid Clara used to say at school.'

Léonie saw that her Deborah had not changed much since they were girls together. She was the same great silly girl she had known at Madame de Bourlon's, and the empty little head under the beautiful tawny tresses was not one bit more sensible than in the bygone days, when it had lain on the pillows of the infirmary.

'But I beg your pardon, my dear!' continued the Baroness. 'I was so full of my own troubles that I quite forgot to ask how you were. Why, it's an age since I saw you. You are looking well, my dear. . . . Are you no happier than you were?'

'No,' quietly answered Madame d'Arlot.

'The same trouble, dear?'

'The same.'

'Oh, I don't wonder you take it to heart!' said Deborah. 'If any one had treated me like that . . . not the Baron, of course, for you see the Baron is different, but any one I loved . . . really I don't know what I should have done.' So saying, she took a long look at herself in the hand-glass, and carefully wiped away the traces of her tears. 'How fortunate it is that you have your religion to comfort you!' she added, after a pause.

'Yes; I have my religion,' mournfully replied the Countess.

'Paule de Lostande was telling me the other day that your mother-in-law had just given you two hundred thousand francs to found an orphanage with. Did she really?'

'Yes,' said Madame d'Arlot. 'My mother-in-law is always very kind to me.' She did not tell her that the old Marquise's generosity, instead of healing her pain, as it was meant to, only revived it.

'Poor Paule!' continued Deborah, who had a morbid fondness for talking about melancholy things when she was ailing.

'She's unhappy, too. You have heard of her husband's death, of course? Killed by a fall from his horse, dear, at the review. She has never recovered from the shock, though they say, you know, she pricks herself with those needles to make her forget it. In fact, it seems she is getting to be a—a—what do they call them? Oh, yes. A morphiomaniac. There's quite a party of them. Each brings her little silver needle-case with her, and then, when they are all together, they get out their needles and stick them into their arms or their legs. . . . It doesn't send them to sleep, you know, but they say the sensation is delightful. . . . The worst of it is, they have to keep on increasing the doses, because the effect wears off.'

'I know,' murmured Madame d'Arlot. 'It's the same with my prayers.' And a minute after Deborah was startled by a cry. 'Oh, Deborah, there's nothing worth living for but love! If my husband had but been willing——!'

She stopped—almost as amazed at the confession which had escaped her in her anguish as her friend was; so ashamed, that for a moment she had to hold her hand to her face to hide her confusion.

'Poor dear,' said Deborah, affectionately, stretching out her hand and drawing it back again, as the thought that she was rubbing the ointment off her bare arm recalled her to her own misery. 'Ah! life's a sad thing

after all. . . . Every one seems to have some unhappiness. . . . Have you heard what has happened to poor Madame Ebsen?'

Léonie dried her eyes at once.

'I called to see you about her,' she said, suddenly rousing herself. 'Would you have believed such a thing was possible? Not even to let her know where her child is! Jeanne Autheman must be a perfect monster.'

'I don't think she has altered much since she left school,' replied Deborah. 'Don't you remember her prim, pretty face, and the Bible she used to have in her apron? She quite turned my head for a moment; I would have gone out to Africa with her, without a moment's hesitation. . . . Can you imagine me converting the negroes?'

It was not very easy to imagine her in any such unlikely position, certainly, as she lay there, carefully laying the ointment on her beautiful neck with a brush.

'But what does your cousin Autheman say to it?' inquired Madame d'Arlot. 'How can he let his wife do such infamous things? It's perfectly heartrending to listen to the poor mother when she tells you her story. . . . Perhaps you have not heard her. You can't think what a sad affair it is. . . . Shall I tell her to come up? She's downstairs in the carriage. . . . She did not like to disturb you on your reception day, but if you don't mind——'

'No, no,' said Deborah, in great consternation. 'Please don't. The Baron told me particularly not to meddle in the affair.'

'The Baron? Why did he tell you that? I was hoping you would have been such a help to us. You see so many people. . . . That Chemineau who is always here, for instance.'

'No, dear, I really can't. Don't ask me to. You don't know how important it is for a banker not to make an enemy of Autheman. He could ruin you with the greatest ease. . . . But why could not you or your husband do something? The Count is a deputy now. . . . He could get anything he liked for the asking, especially as he belongs to the Opposition.'

'I cannot ask my husband to do anything for me,' said the Countess, rising.

Out of politeness Deborah tried to make her stop a little longer; but the feeble creature was rather glad on the whole when her friend went, for she dreaded having to argue about the matter, and would not for the world have had any one see Madame Ebsen at her house.

'I am *so* sorry, dear,' she exclaimed, as Léonie bade her good-bye. 'So sorry for your sake and the poor woman's. . . . You'll come and see me again soon, won't you? Good-bye. Isn't it dreadful! I can't even kiss you!'

She relapsed into despair after that, and

lay back on her bed, moaning like a naughty child, while the thick layers of ointment and enamel dried on her arms and throat, which looked so very like a great wax doll's.

As Léonie d'Arlot went downstairs she could not help saying to herself, 'If these people are afraid, how can I expect any one else to help me?' It seemed a much more difficult matter altogether than she had expected to find it. On the steps, as she was waiting for her carriage, an idea struck her. Yes. . . . She would try. . . . At all events he would be able to advise her. She hurriedly gave an address to the driver and joined Madame Ebsen, who was waiting for her in the carriage as feverishly as if she had half expected her to come back with Eline.

'Well?' was all she said, however.

'Oh! Deborah is as lazy as ever. Her face is bad, and she would be of no use to us at present. . . . We had better see Raverand.'

'Raverand?' said Madame Ebsen, who had never heard so much as the name of the cleverest and most acute barrister in Paris.

'A barrister? Are we going to law, then?'

The very thought of it frightened her. It would be such a long affair, and cost so much money.

Léonie did her best to quiet her. 'Perhaps it won't be necessary,' said she. 'We

shall see. Raverand is a friend of ours.' An old friend of her father's, thanks to whom she had managed to avoid a scandal when her happiness was wrecked.

They drove to an ancient house, which had somehow escaped destruction, in the Rue St. Guillaume—one of the quietest corners of the Faubourg St. Germain. A house with massive portals, and a broad stone staircase. Raverand, who had just returned from the Palais de Justice, had the Countess shown into his study at once, without passing through the room in which a number of impatient people were waiting to consult him.

'What can I do to oblige you?' said the great lawyer. 'Nothing has gone wrong, I hope?'

'Nothing has gone wrong with me,' replied the Countess, 'but a dear friend of mine is in trouble.'

With this she introduced Madame Ebsen, on whom Raverand immediately fixed his sharp, scrutinising eyes. The poor woman was deeply impressed by the silence which reigned in the study, and the earnest, piercing look of the lawyer. . . . What a number of obstacles there seemed to be in her path! And yet it all appeared so simple. She only asked for her child—her Eline, whom they had stolen from her.

'Tell me all about it,' said Raverand. Madame Ebsen had not been able to hear

very well since her illness, however, so he had to repeat the question.

She began, but her anger and indignation almost choked her. All the words rushed to her lips at once, and she found herself mixing up all the languages she knew, especially Danish and German, which were more familiar to her than any others. The efforts she made to tell her story in French caused her to bungle and stutter more than once before she had finished. Her Lina! Her pretty Lina! Stolen away from her! All she cared for in the world! . . . 'Do you understand?' said she, after she had rambled on for a long time about Grandmother, and the Lady President, and the three-sou Prayer-books, and the potions they gave children to drink at Port-Sauveur.

'Not very well, I must confess,' answered the lawyer. But, as Léonie was about to come to her relief, he checked her, saying to Madame Ebsen, 'Your daughter has left you, then, my dear Madam?'

'No, no!' replied Madame Ebsen; 'she has been stolen from me. . . . They have taken away my child, my darling!'

'How, and when?'

He dragged the information he wanted from her piece by piece, and made her repeat every line of that terrible letter which seemed graven on her brain: 'Your affectionate daughter, Eline Ebsen.'

'Have you had no news from her since she left?'

'I have had two letters, Sir; one from London, the other from Zurich. But she is not at either place.'

'Show me the letter from Zurich,' said Raverand.

First, she took a thimble out of her pocket, and then a pair of spectacles, and then a photograph of her daughter, which never left her, and finally she brought up a letter which she unfolded and handed to the lawyer. He read it out slowly, as though trying to get at its most secret meaning. The unfortunate woman was beginning to interest him.

'My dear Mother' (so it ran),—'As I am most anxious not to leave you without news of me, I will no longer delay writing. I have been deeply pained to hear that you have not shrunk from endeavouring, by underhand devices and falsehoods, to injure people who have never done me anything but good. You have made it impossible for me to reveal to you the place to which the service of God has called me, or to express all the respect that has ever been felt for you by your affectionate child in Jesus,

'ELINE EBSEN.'

'A case of religious hysteria,' said Raverand gravely, after a short pause. 'Try Dr. Bouchereau.'

The words conveyed no meaning to the mother. All she knew was that her daughter would never, could never, have written her such a letter if she had not been made to drink that potion. Seeing the lawyer smile incredulously, she put her hand into her pocket again and showed him a paper covered with chemical hieroglyphics, and marked with the stamp of one of the first chemists in Paris. The doctor who had written the prescription appeared to have made free use of such strong alkaloids as strychnine, atropina, and hyosciamina. 'After Eline's departure,' said Madame Ebsen, 'I found a box of pills and a small phial in one of her drawers, too.' These had since been examined and found to contain a preparation of belladonna and a decoction of St. Ignatius beans,[1] strong enough to stupefy and even to madden one.

'The devil!' exclaimed Raverand. 'In the year of grace 1880, too! This is too much of a good thing. How old is your daughter?'

He half rose in his chair, and stretched his little ferret head forward to listen, as though he felt he had a good case now.

'She will soon be twenty,' replied the broken-hearted mother, in a melancholy tone; for it seemed doubly hard that her child should have been taken from her in the glorious flush and prime of her youth.

[1] *St. Ignatius bean*—nux vomica.

'A magnificent case!' said the old lawyer, thinking aloud. Léonie d'Arlot grew radiant.

'And Madame Ebsen is not the only victim. We could tell you of other mothers who have been wronged in the same way, and even more cruelly,' said she.

'What is the woman's name?' inquired Raverand, excitedly, much to Madame Ebsen's amazement, for she could not have believed such a question necessary.

'Why, Madame Autheman, of course,' said Léonie.

The lawyer's face fell in an instant, and he exclaimed:

'Oh, in that case' —— and stopped, out of respect for the dignity of his profession. There was no mistaking his meaning, though. Evidently he saw that there was nothing to be done. He advised the poor woman to avoid the useless danger of a lawsuit. The Authemans were too powerful, so entirely unimpeachable. Their reputation, moral and financial, stood so high. It would be best to have patience—to wait for a good opportunity. Eline would be of age before they could end a lawsuit, and free to do as she liked. Thus Raverand, the acute.

'Is there no such thing as justice, then!' sadly exclaimed Madame Ebsen, in the very same tones as the peasant at Petit-Port, whose sullen grief she seemed to have before her eyes in that despairing moment. But a

card had just been brought in to Raverand, and he had already risen.

'A word from the Garde des Sceaux—an official inquiry—might help you to find out where your daughter is, at least. . . . But I doubt whether any Minister would undertake the responsibility of such a measure . . . unless. . . . Are you not a foreigner, by-the-bye? Ah, I thought so. You had better go and see your consul.'

As he accompanied them to the door, he whispered to the Countess:

'After all, her child is not unhappy.'

'No; but the mother!'

'All mothers are martyrs,' said Raverand. 'But, to change the subject, how are your own affairs going? What is your husband doing?'

'I don't know.'

'Still relentless?'

'Yes.'

'And yet the Count seemed to me to be settling down. He has taken to politics. His last speech in the Chamber was very sensible.'

'Good-bye, my friend,' hastily said Léonie.

When they got into the carriage again the mother's teeth were chattering. 'I'm cold,' she exclaimed. 'Will you please take me home, Léonie?'

'Not yet, not yet,' said Madame d'Arlot. 'We will try the consul first. Where does he live?'

'In the Faubourg Poissonnière. M. Desnos.'

Desnos was a furniture maker in a large way of business, who had got himself appointed consul with a view to pushing his trade. Of the language, laws, customs, and the very geographical situation of the country he represented, he knew absolutely nothing. His offices were on the right-hand side of a covered courtyard, at the end of which was an immense workshop, filled with noisy lathes, saws, and steam-engines. In the office you were greeted by the sound of scratchy pens, the rustling of the leaves in the ledgers, and the hum of the gas by the light of which a number of clerks were writing.

Count d'Arlot's name secured them prompt attention here as it had done at the lawyer's. Desnos had the ladies shown into his comfortable private room at once. It was separated from the workshop by a glass door, through which you saw long rows of men in blouses at work.

'Is the gas lit upstairs?' asked the manufacturer, taking it for granted that his visitors had come to look at some furniture. When he heard the real nature of their errand, his good-tempered face grew gloomy directly.

'The consulate hours are from two to four, by rights, ladies,' said he; 'but, as you are here, I shall of course be happy to attend

to you.' With that he folded his hands over his well-filled, respectable waistcoat, and went on listening to the pleasant hum of the steam-engines in the workshop.

'Bless my soul!' he exclaimed, when they had ended their story. 'What an unlikely story! Poison and child-stealing! That sort of thing might go down at Ambigu, but really it won't do here, in the very heart of Paris, amidst all these Edison lamps and telephones.' . . . Desnos got quite indignant. He really could not listen to another word. Why, Autheman was his banker! The richest, safest, most respectable bank in Paris. It was quite impossible people like the Authemans could be guilty of such crimes. He protested, speaking to the Countess all the time, as though her companion was too insignificant to be taken any notice of—'I should strongly advise you not to spread these calumnious reports about, Madame. The honour of all commercial Paris is bound up in the honour of the Authemans.' And he bowed them out unceremoniously. Business was business, and time was precious at the end of the week. If he could be of service to the Countess in any other way, she had only to call at the consulate. The hours were two to four. She had better ask for M. Dahrelupe.

The workshop was as full of noise and bustle as ever when the ladies got back to the dark courtyard. Trucks and hand-carts

were rolling and rumbling over the stones, and the ground shook and trembled as though a train were passing over it. It was no easy matter to pick their way through the confusion and reach the street. The workmen, unloading wood, hustled them roughly as they passed. A clumsy truck all but ran into them, and poor, deaf, timid Madame Ebsen uttered a cry of terror as the wheels slightly grazed her. Léonie took her compassionately by the hand, wondering to herself what would become of the unfortunate creature if she were left alone in her distress. No, she could not abandon her. They *must* have that official inquiry Raverand had spoken of. 'M. d'Arlot shall go and see the Minister,' she promised, when they were seated in the carriage. 'Oh, how kind you are, dear!' gratefully replied the mother. And in the darkness, the Countess felt the scalding tears drop on her gloves.

It was no small sacrifice Léonie was making for her old friend. She was about to ask a favour of her husband for her—of a man who was a perfect stranger to her, though they lived under the same roof. She brooded over all her wrongs again, as they drove home, and found time had not made them a bit less shameful, not a bit less cruel to think upon. Her husband's ruthless betrayal of her still rankled in her heart. She could not have forgotten, if she had wished to, even, how she had surprised the lovers

that day—the ingenuous little bride who used to call her 'sister,' and her paramour—or how low and gross was the love she had surprised.

What had her husband done to expiate his baseness? What effort had he made to win her pardon? He was always at his club or with his mistresses; or had been till, six months before, he had grown weary of the worn-out ballet-dancer whom he had last 'protected,' and taken to politics—which were not so very much more decent, after all, than the worn-out ballet-dancer, who, it appeared, kept an equivocal fancy-shop in the Avenue de l'Opéra. He would be glad enough to return to the old footing, no doubt, though he had not dared to hint at such a thing; for he needed a place to receive his political friends in, and it would be extremely useful to him to have his wife go into society again and forget the past. But, no. That could never be. Never! They were separated, and should be, till death parted them for ever.

Next moment, however, came the reaction. She thought of the weary hollowness of her life, which not all the sermons she heard, nor the long hours of prayer at Ste. Clotilde's, could fill. Her child was there to save her from ever falling herself if the temptation came; but was such negative virtue enough for happiness? 'Raverand is right,' she sighed; 'I am relentless.'

Less relentless far, however, than she had been a few hours before. The mother's tears shed on her hand that day had softened her and made her more womanly. The Ebsen drama had roused her from the mystic torpor in which she had so long been lying, hoping, expecting no consolation but in death.

She found the lights lit in the drawing-room on her return. It was the first time such a thing had happened for a long, long while past. Her little daughter was seated on a high stool at the piano, playing an exercise under the direction of her old governess. The Count was watching the child's tiny fingers as they toiled over the keys, and a large shaded lamp shed its soft rays upon the family group.

'We're having a little music before dinner,' said the Count, with a faint smile that wrinkled the big, battered nose which gave him such a benevolent and majestic look in the Chamber.

The homelike look of it all took her so by surprise that she began an apology for being so late. Yielding to a sudden impulse, however, she stopped, and exclaimed, 'I have a favour to ask of you, Henri.'

Henri! . . . It was years since he had heard himself called by the name; for, in the Avenue de l'Opéra, he was known only by the endearing sobriquet of Biquette. When the governess had removed the child and she

had taken off her gloves and bonnet, Léonie told him of all Madame Ebsen's misfortunes and of the awe with which the Authemans inspired everybody, and of Raverand's suggestion that they should appeal to the Garde des Sceaux. She was standing in front of the fireplace, looking wonderfully charming and sweet with the slight flush upon her cheek, as she warmed her dainty feet at the fire. But this was no trifle she was asking. It would be very difficult to appeal to the Minister just then, for the Right and the Left were engaged in a fierce struggle. The decrees against the monks and that bill on the magistracy . . .

She drew closer to him and looked at him with her pretty hazel eyes :

'Please do this for me, Henri!'

'I would do anything for you, my dear.'

He was on the point of clasping her in his arms, when the door was flung wide open and an automaton lackey announced that dinner was served. Henri d'Arlot offered the Countess his arm, and, as they walked into the dining-room, where the child sat eyeing them inquisitively, he fancied he felt the fair, round arm in his press against him slightly, and tremble.

And this was all that came of Madame Ebsen's exertions.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST LETTER.

'PRIDE—all pride. The woman's full of it. She has neither heart nor bowels of compassion. . . . The Anglican plague has killed all feeling in her. . . . Hard and cold, I say, as . . . as this piece of marble.'

Saying which, the old Dean, who was seated in front of the fireplace, struck the mantelpiece so fiercely with the tongs that Goody quietly took them away from him. He was so absorbed in the story of his visit to the Hotel Autheman, however, that he did not notice their disappearance.

'I reasoned with her, and implored, and threatened. . . . All I got for answer was scraps of sermons, edifying talk of the falling off in faith, and the need of shining examples. . . . The jade speaks well. . . . Too much of that jargon about Canaan, of course, but eloquent and earnest, undoubtedly. . . . I do not wonder she turned that little head. . . . See what power she has even over Crouzat. . . . Well, I gave her my opinion of her plainly, at all events!' said the Dean, rising and pacing excitedly up and down the room.

'"Who *are* you?" Madame said. "Who has given you authority to speak in this

tone? God? Nay, it is not God guides you. In all you do I see only the reflection of your own cold, cruel soul, which seems to have a quarrel with life, and to be always thirsting to avenge some wrong done you."'

'And her husband stood by without saying anything?' inquired the little old lady, in great consternation.

'He did not say a word. He only smiled in his usual equivocal way, and looked at me with that fixed, scorching eye of his.'

'Well, sit down, now. Look what a state you have put yourself into!' said Madame Aussandon, going to the back of the chair in which her hero was at last resting, to wipe his full, broad, thoughtful forehead, and relieve him of his scarf. 'You must really not excite yourself like that.'

'How can I help it? Think what a wrong and a misfortune it is! . . . I feel quite grieved for poor Lorie.'

'Oh, never mind him,' said Madame Aussandon, with a gesture which showed she had not yet pardoned his having for a time been preferred to her son.

'But her mother! Think of the poor mother not even knowing where her daughter is! Just imagine yourself in her place, confronting this woman? What would you do?'

'I'd . . . I'd bite her head off!' she replied, with such a terrible snap of that projecting jaw of hers that, feeling en-

couraged by his wife's anger, he laughed outright, and ventured a little further.

'Oh, but they have not done with me yet, you know! Nothing shall prevent me from speaking out and holding them up to public indignation. Aye, even if I lose my place, I'll do it!'

It was an unlucky speech, and brought the good woman to her sober senses in a minute. No, no, she would not hear of it. Lose his place, indeed!

'You'll have the goodness not to stir one step in the matter!' she exclaimed. 'You understand, Albert?'

'Don't say that, Goody,' said poor Albert, beseechingly. But Goody would not be persuaded. If they had had only themselves to think of, it might not have mattered; but there were the boys. Louis was expecting his promotion, and Frederic had not been appointed to that post yet, and the Major was hoping to get his decoration. . . . Why, by lifting his little finger Autheman could dash all their hopes to the ground.

'But my duty?' feebly expostulated the Dean, who had almost yielded already.

'You did your duty to-day,' replied his wife, 'and more than your duty. Do you suppose the Authemans will ever pardon you for speaking to them like that? Just you listen to me!'

She took him by the hand, and argued

the matter out to the bitter end. How would he like to attend all those weddings and funerals at his age? Was he not himself always saying, 'At the top of the hill! At the top of the hill!' Surely he had not forgotten the trouble he had had in climbing it? Only think of it. A pretty thing it would be, truly, if he had to begin life over again, and he seventy-five!

'Goody!' he once more implored, for conscience sake. His wife's arguments were the very same as those he had just been hearing from the lips of his colleagues at the Faculty of Theology, as he walked up and down the cold little quadrangle. Human selfishness is merciless. He was fain to acknowledge to himself that the idea of having to climb the hill again with his old legs was alarming. Worse than all was the thought of the dreadful domestic storms he would have to expect if he were audacious enough to carry out the plan he had formed after leaving the Authemans. Yet how could he face that poor mother if he did nothing? She had come to him so trustingly, believing him to be the one brave spot in the world of cowardice; and now he was about to turn his back like the rest of them, and would have either to shut his eyes to the sight of her great sorrow, or deceive her with vague, untruthful promises and condolence. Ah, what a valiant pastor he made for those hypocrites and cowards!

For many days after this old Aussandon found neither peace nor comfort as he laboured on the top of that hill of his. Remorse, clinging, cruel remorse, sat at his side, go where he would to get rid of it. It followed him into the sordid Faubourg St. Jacques, and waited for him at the corner of the Boulevard Arago while he delivered his lectures. He did not even dare to do any gardening, although it was sowing time, for in the garden his remorse took a human shape, and dogged him in the form of a pale-faced, weeping mother, who sat at a window wondering what religion would do to help her, now that religion had taken from her all she loved.

She soon found out that he had abandoned her, like the rest, and was not much astonished. Fear deprived her of some of her friends. Pity for her took away many of the others. Pity, for they knew that they grieved vainly for her grief, and were powerless to lighten it. There were the sceptics, too, who refused to believe in a story that smacked so much of Anne Radcliffe, and went about wagging their heads knowingly, and muttering, 'There must be something behind all this.'

Yes. Paris is enlightened; Paris is full of generous ideas and progress. But adventures and misadventures follow each other in the great city like the short, crisp waves of the Mediterranean. No sooner has one

wave broken than it is washed into oblivion by the next. Nothing is stable; nothing lasts. 'Poor Madame Ebsen! How very dreadful!' said Paris for a day or two. But next week the fire at the 'Magasins de l'Univers,' and the double suicide, and the woman who had been cut to pieces and dished up in the columns of the 'Temps,' drove Madame Ebsen and her woes out of its head. The one house in which she had hitherto invariably found friends who sympathised with her was closed. The Count and Countess d'Arlot left suddenly for Nice, after receiving a confidential report on the private inquiry which had been made by the Corbeil magistrates.

The report was drawn up very cleverly—wittily even—and gave a minute description of the Château, schools, and Retreat at Port-Sauveur, together with the names of all the workwomen then living there:—

Sophie Chalmette, aged 36, of La Rochelle.
Marie Souchotte, aged 20, of Petit-Port.
Bastienne Gélinot, aged 18, of Athis-Mons.
Louise Braun, aged 27, of Berne.
Catherine Looth, aged 32, of the United States.

Eline Ebsen, added the report, was travelling for the Mission in Switzerland, Germany, and England, but had no settled place of residence, and wrote regularly to her mother.

For some time past, it was true, Madame Ebsen had, thanks to Pastor Birk, been

given frequent opportunities of corresponding with her daughter. But all her letters were first directed to Port-Sauveur, and there re-addressed. At first her letters were furious and despairing, filled with heart-rending appeals to her filial affection, and threats of vengeance on the bankers. But their tone changed quickly when she found that Eline refused to reply to the insults heaped upon friends so respected and respectable. Since then the mother's letters had grown humble and timid, and had contained little but touching pictures of her lonely and desolate existence, which had been powerless to soften the cold and resolute spirit of the young girl's letters. They had become as stiff and regular as her English handwriting—brought her mother little but formal inquiries after her health; vague and fanatical phrases anent the worship of God; and mystical effusions in which her affectionate feelings in Jesus replaced the old, simple farewell kiss.

Nothing could well be stranger than this epistolary dialogue—the preaching, ranting jargon of the daughter, and the natural tenderness of the mother. Heaven and earth may have been speaking through them, but they were too far apart to hope ever to understand each other, and the sensitive conducting wires hung, snapped and floating, in mid-air. The mother wrote:—'Dear child, where are you? What are you doing?

I think of you, and weep, daily. Yesterday was All Souls' Day, and I was at the cemetery. I send you a little nosegay which I gathered at Grandmother's grave.'

The child replied: 'I thank you for remembering me, mother. Yet it is sweeter far to possess a living and eternal Saviour, than these miserable flowers. I pray fervently, dear mother, that you may be pardoned by our Blessed Lord, and that He will grant you His peace and the comfort which He giveth freely to all men.'

Painful and cold though they were, these letters were the mother's greatest comfort. When they arrived she dried her tears. The expectation of them gave her an interest in life, and strength to resist the temptation to commit rash deeds. Good M. Birk was in deadly fear that she would do something irreparably foolish in her despair. Who knew whether she might not lie in wait for Madame Autheman's carriage some night, and throw herself under the wheels, crying, 'My child! Where is my child!' Or she might set off for London, or Switzerland, and institute an inquiry of her own, as she had been advised to do at the inquiry office.

'My poor friend, my poor friend,' said Birk, 'you must not think of it.' It would ruin her to go on these journeys; and as to attempting any public demonstration, why, it might lead to her being thrown into prison—

or worse. What he meant by worse, Birk never very clearly explained; but he spoke with such an impressive air of mystery that he succeeded in alarming her. Taking her hands in his own—which always smelt of pomade, like the long locks he was so fond of stroking—he soothed her by fair promises. 'Trust me,' said he, 'I shall do my utmost. You will get your child back if you are only patient.'

What mistakes we make about people! thought Madame Ebsen. This man, whose honeyed words and cupidity she had so distrusted, was now the only person, but Lorie, who still came to see her, and showed some interest in her doings. He had even invited her to partake of the national *Risengroed* with him, in that comfortable bachelor's apartment which was so daintly adorned with the offerings of his fair parishioners; and he never bade her goodbye without saying, 'You should really try to divert your thoughts more, my poor friend.'

But how could she divert them when they turned steadily and persistently to one all-absorbing idea? Eline had taken neither clothes nor linen away with her, and the whole house seemed full of her. The most trifling things—an open drawer, or a scent-bottle—brought back the memory of the girl to her mother. The long, green book in which she had been in the habit of making private notes and inscribing her daily expenses, op-

posite to the sums which she had collected for her lessons, lay on the table, and told how honest, brave, and hardworking she had been—how much she had thought of other people's happiness. 'A mantle for Fanny,' you read on one page. On another, 'Lent to Henriette.' A little further, on the margin of the page headed St. Elizabeth's Day (the fête-day of Madame Ebsen), close to the entries for *bouquets and presents*, was this line, written in a childish hand, '*I love dear Mama.*'

A most sensible book it was, altogether. One of those books formerly treasured up by families, and of which old Montaigne says, 'Pleasing to see, and well fitted to remove sorrow.' But the sorrow of Madame Ebsen only grew more bitter as she and Lorie turned the leaves of the green book together of an evening. The tears rose to their eyes at the sight of it, and they dared not look each other in the face.

To poor Lorie Eline's departure seemed almost like a second bereavement; a bereavement even harder to bear than the first, for his grief was mingled with the humiliation he felt at having failed to fill the heart of this young girl, who had seemed so calm, and yet had craved so passionately for excitement. It was some comfort to his wounded self-respect (though he would not have owned it), to know that he was not the only person she had forsaken.

In their common affliction he and Eline's mother were drawn closer to each other and resumed their old affectionate intimacy. On returning from the office he would go upstairs to hear whether Madame Ebsen had had any news, and he would linger for hours by the fireplace, listening to the same sad story, the same mother's sobs; and as he marked how quiet the little parlour had become, and yet how little the sights and sounds around them had changed, he looked instinctively towards Grandmother's favourite corner, once so often brightened by Eline's rippling laughter. And behold it was full of shadows and the silence which comes after death or partings.

As she was alone all day, Madame Ebsen often went out in the evenings, when she had done her housekeeping, to call on friends. The 'wallflowers' who had formerly come to her Sunday gatherings, let her run on as she liked about the abduction and the mysterious St. Ignatius beans. Her stories did not weary them or ruffle their composure. Sometimes, too, with the physical restlessness that often accompanies fixed mental pain (as though the body was striving to counteract the unnatural strain on the mind), she would go out into the streets and join the thousands of aimless, purposeless wanderers who lounge at shop-windows, or idle on bridges, and feel the same indifference to all the sights that greet them,

whether they be flowing rivers, or stumbling omnibus horses, or fashionable milliners' shops. Who knows how many inventors, poets, enthusiasts, criminals, and madmen there may be amongst those waking sleep-walkers, wandering about the great city to dream or escape remorse! In the densest crowd they seem alone. Idlers though they be, none are busier. Nor does anything distract them from their fixed idea. Neither the clouds they stare at, nor the men they jostle, nor the book they may be holding in their hand, and seem to read.

Madame Ebsen's wanderings always led her to the same spot, the Hotel Autheman, to which she had several times tried to get admission, in the hope of gleaning information about her daughter from the servants. But she lacked the golden bribe that brightens the brains of hirelings, and had to rest satisfied with prowling round the house, to which an unconquerable instinct drew her, even when she knew her daughter could not be in France. She would walk up and down in front of the building for hours together, looking at the high, dingy walls and irregular windows at the bottom of the courtyard—where the carriages were waiting, and men with steel chains attached to their coats were going in and out loaded with sacks of silver coin and bundles of bank notes. Grave people met and chatted on

the steps of the bank, but they made no noise. All you heard was a low, unceasing tinkle—a silvery murmur, no louder than the sound of an invisible stream into which tiny rivulets emptied themselves all day, till it swelled and swelled into the broad, rushing river called the fortune of the Authemans, and flooded the world; an impetuous torrent, which the strongest feared, and the most staunch and honest found irresistible.

Now and then the sight of the brown carriage and pair issuing from the great doorway, and the cruel, imperious profile visible through the windows, gave her a momentary longing to commit the wild act of folly she had been warned against. But the recollection of Birk's threats, the fear of being sent to prison, 'or worse,' to the terrible place the pastor shrank from naming, invariably stopped her. With what a beating heart and tone of anguish she asked, 'Nothing for me yet, Madame Blot?' when she returned from these long rambles, after having allowed as much time as she could for the long-expected, unlikely *something* to happen. . . . Once or twice a cold message from her 'affectionate child' reached her; but never, never the unlikely something she hoped for almost against hope.

One day she was startled by a loud, sudden ring that seemed familiar. . . . Trembling in every limb, she went to the door, where two affectionate arms were flung

round her by Henriette Briss. . . . She had a little summer bonnet on, though they were in midwinter, and the snow was trickling down her cheeks. She had just left her situation at the Russian Ambassador's in Copenhagen. . . . Such charming people, said Henriette, but—vulgar! Besides, she had found it impossible to stay away from Paris long, although her former superior at the Convent of the Sacré Cœur was always telling her Paris was as dangerous to her as a razor in the hands of a child.

Henriette entered the well-known little parlour while she rambled on, not remarking, in the flow of her own high spirits, how careworn and sad the mother's face had become. All at once, checking herself and turning towards Madame Ebsen with a sudden goat-like start, she exclaimed, 'Why, where is Lina? Hasn't she come home yet?'

A sob was the answer she got. Come home? Lina? Ah, there was no Lina there any more! 'They have stolen her away,' she at last managed to ejaculate. 'I am alone.'

It was a minute or two before Henriette understood her. Even when the meaning of the words dawned on her, she vowed she could not believe that so sensible and affectionate a girl could have acted so. . . . 'Oh, that Jeanne Autheman fishes cleverly for souls! . . . ' said she, looking curiously at the two or three little gilt-edged books—unconscious accomplices in the crime—which

were lying on the table. On one you read: *Morning Hours.* On another: *Communings of a Christian Heart.* Yes, the woman was very clever, very clever. But for her Protestantism she might have been a sister of Antoinette Bourignon.

'Who was she?' inquired the mother, drying her eyes.

'What? Have you never heard of Antoinette Bourignon?' said Henriette. 'She was a prophetess who lived in the time of Madame Guyon, and wrote more than twenty volumes.'

'Prophetess or not,' gravely replied Madame Ebsen, 'if she broke mothers' hearts she was a bad woman, and I would rather not talk of her.'

Her intuition told her that Henriette was not really in sympathy with her sorrow, and that she longed to give vent to something which trembled on her lip and shone in her eyes, and made her bony hand shake as she turned the leaves of the book she was reading.

'Would you mind lending this book to me?' asked crazy Henriette, burning to read the *Communings* and refute the heresies it was sure to be full of.

'Take them all, if you like,' replied Madame Ebsen.

Henriette kissed her effusively, and hoped she would come and see her, whenever she felt inclined to, at her new quarters—Ma-

gnabos, Painter and Decorator, in the Rue de Sèvres. 'They are charming people,' said she, 'and we are in the very midst of the convents. Mind you come. It will be a change for you.'

The visit had been a painful trial for Madame Ebsen. How many old associations it had reminded her of! How many long discussions Henriette had had in that very room with Lina, and how sensible and kind hearted Lina had always shown herself in those days! Would her daughter ever return to the room they had so often wept and rejoiced in together? She thought of the dreary *Juliaften* she had spent, and of Grandmother's death, and the sad return home after the funeral, and of how Eline had promised her that evening that she would 'never, oh never, leave her mother;' and sitting down, with these melancholy memories haunting her, she wrote a last, imploring, heart-broken letter to her lost child.

'. . . If I could only work and teach to divert my thoughts, I might bear it, dear; but sorrow has made me weak, my eyes are failing, and since that illness I have been afflicted with deafness. I have but a very little money left. In a few months all will have been spent, and what will then become of me? Oh, my own sweet darling, how I pray on my bended knees for your return! It is an unhappy and an aged woman writes you this, not your poor mother. . . .'

The answer came to her on an open postcard, dated Jersey.

'I am deeply grieved, dear mother, to hear such bad accounts of your health; but I take comfort in the thought that these trials bring you nearer to the Lord daily. I am busy, working out our salvation, and cannot return. I must hold myself aloof from the world and shun evil.'

Cruelty of cruelties! Was this the testimony she bore to the Gospel of Light? Was she not to be allowed even to confide her troubles to her child? And was it forbidden even to weep unheard?

They had brought her child to look upon her own mother as the Tempter. She must 'shun evil,' and the evil was—her mother!

'My child is lost to me!' she said. 'I will write no more letters.'

And, in her large, straggling hand, she wrote these words on the card—*My child's last letter to me.*

'Madame Ebsen! Madame Ebsen!' cried a voice from the garden.

She dried her tears, opened the window, and saw M. Aussandon's grand old face upturned towards her.

'I shall be preaching at the Oratory next Sunday,' said the voice. 'Come and hear me. . . . I shall have something to say about you . . . something that will please you!'

He lifted his hand to his little black cap, and went back to his budding rose bushes. Ah, you could see that Madame Aussandon was away from home again! The Dean would not have been out in the bleak, March weather, if Goody had been there!

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE ORATORY.

AUSSANDON stood in the disrobing-room of the Oratory—two small rooms run into one and plainly furnished with a few straw chairs, a deal table, a couple of large cupboards, and one of those china stoves you see in custom-house offices. Round him were several of his brother ministers and colleagues of the Faculty, to whom he was talking in an undertone, breaking off now and then to shake hands with some new arrival. Outside in the street you heard the constant roll of carriages driving up to the church, and stopping at the two entrances, to let out the people, who presently came pouring like a flood through the gloomy passages and down the aisles.

The old Dean had donned his ecclesiastical vestments, and was ready to ascend to the pulpit. He wore the severe black gown and blue bands of the Reformed Church, the costume of a lawyer rather than of a priest;

well suited therefore to its ministers, whom that Church regards as God's advocates on earth. And, indeed, Aussandon had an advocate's part to play that morning; ay, and even the part of a public prosecutor. The notes he was turning over on the little table before him formed a terrible charge against the Authemans. For five months past the matter had been in his mind; but until then he had hesitated to act, fearing the consequences, not to himself, but to his children and to Goody, who was constantly on the watch. Happily for his honour and conscience, the birth of a grandson had at last called the old lady away to Commentry; and the Dean, seeing in her departure the hand of God stretched out to help his poor human weakness, had set to work on the instant. In two nights he had written the sermon which had so long been pent up and driving him half distracted. One of the ministers announced to preach at the Oratory had allowed him to take his Sunday; and for a week past all Protestant Paris had been looking forward to once again, after many years of silence, hearing the voice of the illustrious preacher who, like Bossuet when he preached on the occasion of Mademoiselle de la Vallière's withdrawal to the convent, 'was known no more in the pulpits.'

One carriage after another dashed up: with much clatter of steps, and banging of doors, and prancing of horses. The crowd

poured ceaselessly into the corridors, and every moment the vestry was invaded by some deacon, or elder, or member of the Consistory.

'Good morning; we are all here.'

'Good morning, M. Arlès. Good morning.'

'What subject have you chosen for your sermon, Dean? I have not seen the bills.'

'The gospel for the day. The Sermon on the Mount.'

'Why, you will almost fancy yourself back at Mondardier amongst your wood-cutters.'

'Nay, nay. My sermon is meant for Paris. I had something to say to this city before I died.'

'Take care, Aussandon,' whispered in his ear one of his colleagues of the Theological Faculty, who was standing beside him.

The Dean shook his head, however, and made no answer. He had listened to the voice of prudence too long already.

Once more he had returned to the Hotel Autheman to implore that pitiless woman to tell him where Lina was. Gladly would he have gone to seek the poor distracted creature. Gladly would he have restored her to her mother's loving arms. But Madame Autheman's answer to all his questions was one unvarying 'I know not. God has called her to her work.' Then the minister had threatened to denounce her publicly to the Church; but that, too, had proved unavailing. 'Do so, if you wish,

Dean,' said Jeanne Autheman. 'We shall go to hear you.'

'Ay, and you shall hear me, wretch!' indignantly muttered the minister, as he slowly ascended the winding stairs leading to the pulpit, closed the low door at the top, and stood, with the light full upon him, before the congregation which thronged every corner of the immense building.

The ancient church of the Oratorians, ceded to the Protestants by the terms of the Concordat, is the largest and most imposing temple of the Reformed Faith in Paris. The other Protestant churches—especially the newer ones—have little that suggests religion about them. The aristocratic edifice in the Rue Roquépine, with its white-walled rotunda lighted from above, looks too much like a corn-market. The Salle St. André (the headquarters of the Liberals), with its wide galleries, reminds one of a music-hall. The Oratory, however, with its great bare walls, from which all decoration is banished but a few texts and sacred verses, its extinguished candles and lack of pictures, seems the very embodiment and symbol of pure Christianity and the Reformation. The side chapels have been almost entirely walled up. Here and there is a small gallery. The choir has been suppressed, and the altar replaced by an organ. The life of the church now centres at the long

Communion table in front of the pulpit. On ordinary occasions this table is merely covered with a cloth, but on Communion Sundays it is loaded with silver-gilt cups and baskets. And this is all.

The lofty roof and dim, mysterious windows deepen the impression produced by the simplicity of the place, and make it solemn. Especially is this so when the Oratory is crowded and black with people; when every seat is filled; when the galleries overflow; and even the irregular steps at the entrance doors are occupied. Over the principal doorway is a stained-glass window, on which there blazes a huge presentment of the red ribbon and cross of the Legion of Honour, a souvenir of the first Protestant minister, who was decorated after the signing of the Concordat. The light streaming through illuminates the whole building; throws a rosy tint upon the walls and organ-pipes, and touches the cups on the Communion table at the foot of the pulpit, towards which all eyes are turned in expectation of the preacher.

Withdrawing again to a dark corner of the pulpit, Aussandon rests for a moment to quiet the emotion which always sets his heart beating so violently when he is about to plead on behalf of God. One rapid glance at the congregation tells him that Autheman is not in his place on the benches of the elders. But exactly opposite to him—and forming, as it were, a natural object for

him to direct his sermon at—he sees the unbending figure and pale face of the banker's wife, whose wilful eyes seem to scorch and burn him even at that distance. Further away, in one of the galleries, he sees another figure, the mother's, thickly veiled and dressed in deep mourning. She, too, has been faithful to the appointment. How eager and excited she appears!

Well may she be excited, for at last the hour of justice has struck. All these rich people, these celebrities, and these dashing carriages outside at the church doors have come there for her. It is for her that the great preacher stands there in the pulpit, and that the sweet strains of music come floating down the aisles toward her, filling her eyes with tears. It is for her the reader opens the New Testament, and reads that most beautiful Sermon on the Mount, which refreshes her weary soul like a health-giving breeze: *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. . . . Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* Oh, how she mourns! How she hungers and thirsts! At every Biblical allusion she presses the hand of Lorie, who sits beside her almost as unnerved as herself.

Now the female choir is singing Marot's Psalm—

'Seigneur, écoute mon bon droit,
Entend ma voix quand je te crie'—

while the organ peals out an accompaniment. Her mother's anguish rises to Heaven and cries aloud at the sound of the pure, young voices that are so like her Eline's. And at last Aussandon issues from the shadow of the pulpit.

He bears his seventy-five years bravely, and the head that rises above the long, white bands of his judge's gown has lost but little of its vigour. In ringing tones he reads the text of his sermon, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?* Then, speaking quietly, simply, as though to mark the change from God's voice to the mere man's, he begins:

'Brethren, three hundred years ago a certain Pierre Ayraut, a lawyer in the Paris Parliament, a learned man and wise, had the terrible misfortune to lose his only son—stolen away by the Jesuits, who persuaded him to join their Order, and never more suffered him to see his friends. So deep and eloquent was the father's despair, that the King, the Parliament, and finally the Pope himself, interfered, and attempted—vainly—to restore his son to him. Weary of useless effort, Pierre Ayraut sat him down and wrote his noble treatise on Paternal Authority. That finished, he took to his bed, and died broken-hearted.

'The abominable crime committed three

centuries ago has been repeated, by Protestants, members of the Reformed Church, calling themselves Christians!'

Then followed a rapid outline of the story. He told them of Eline's disappearance, and the incurable grief of her poor mother, who, poor humble soul, had disturbed neither King nor Parliament; had had no comfort but her ceaseless tears.

Thus far the preacher had made no allusion that could enable his listeners to guess who were the culprits. But when he went on to tell them of a woman with a heart of stone, protected by a respected name and enormous wealth, no one could doubt any longer that his attack was directed against Madame Autheman, who confronted him, unblushing, with her waxen face upturned. The grand voice still thundered and rolled through the church like the echoing of a mountain storm. For many a long day the Oratory had known no such sermon. It had grown used to conventional phrases, well-turned, but commonplace, ecclesiastical periods. The bold, clear accents, and simple images of the preacher seemed to purify the air of the church and make it redolent of spring. In his mouth the Scriptures recovered their ancient majesty and beauty; and became once more, as in the old days, instinct with life and the freedom of Nature.

With admirable irony Aussandon de-

nounced all such pseudo-pious Missions as that of the Lady Evangelists, naming none of them, however, but describing them as excrescences of the tree of Christianity, and parasites. If the tree was to preserve its power and health they must be mercilessly pruned and cleared away. With that the minister fell upon their public witness-bearings—their mystical, hysterical prayer meetings and exhibitions. They were worthy of Ashantees; more ferocious and not less grotesque than the orgies of that Salvation Army which covers the walls of Paris with gigantic posters, and stations young girls in knickerbockers at the street corners to distribute printed puffs in the name of Jesus. Then, raising his arms with a grand sweeping gesture that seemed to carry him far above the pulpit and the church; far above the vaulted roof and the mysteries of the clouds; far beyond, to the Throne of Grace, he exclaimed, 'Oh, merciful God, Thou God of charity, pity, and justice, Lord alike of men and of the stars of heaven, behold what caricatures they do make of Thy Divinity. Though Thou hast denied, yea, and cursed them, in Thy glorious Sermon on the Mount, the pride of the false prophets and the miracle-mongers has not abated. They still commit every kind of crime in Thy name. Their lies spread darkness round Thy religion of light. For this cause has Thy aged servant once again come forth

from the night of meditation and silence. For this he stands again to-day in Thy pulpit to denounce these crimes to the consciences of Christians, and overwhelm the evil-doers with Thy malediction—*I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.*'

The minister's words died away amidst the strained and hushed attention which is the applause of religious gatherings. Wet eyes and panting hearts, but nowhere a sound; save in a corner in one of the galleries, where the poor mother sat sobbing loudly, with her face buried in her hands. But her tears have no longer the old bitterness; they are tears of comfort this time, for now she feels she is indeed avenged. No more need she endure the anguish of dreading lest God should be on the side of the wicked. She knows now that God is on her side. He has protested and commanded; surely Eline must obey His voice and return to her old mother.

Meanwhile the Dean, having descended from the pulpit, was standing before the long table, on which the wine trembled in the cups between four baskets filled with bread. As he stood there reading the sublime and simple prayers which precede the Communion Service—*Hear now, my brethren, after what manner our Lord Jesus Christ did institute the Sacrament of the Holy Communion*—he started. For, seated rigid

and motionless on her bench, he perceived the banker's wife. How did she dare to stay, he marvelled, after her public rebuke? Why had she not gone out when, after the benediction, he had enjoined all those who did not intend to partake of the Communion to withdraw decently and with order? Could she mean to carry her audacity so far as to . . . ? Well, here were words in the Liturgy that suited her. He read them out in a loud voice, emphasising them for her especial benefit: *Let all then diligently examine themselves before they drink of this Cup, and eat of that Bread. For if we receive the same unworthily, we eat and drink our own damnation.*

And still she did not stir. Aussandon looked at the rows of faces stretching away in front of him to the very end of the building, and it seemed that amongst them all he saw only that of Jeanne Autheman, whose clear, unfathomable gaze met his own as doggedly as ever. For the second time, as the service ordains, he slowly repeated the solemn admonition: *Therefore, if any of you be not penitent, ready to renounce injustice, and repair the wrongs they have done to their neighbour, I declare unto them they cannot hold Communion with Christ Jesus, and enjoin them to withdraw from this His holy table, lest they profane it.*

Not one of all those worthy Christians flinched. Not one for a moment hesitated,

or seemed troubled by the solemn spectacle of the vast congregation waiting, silent and erect. Then in grave tones the minister read the exhortation—*Draw near now, my brethren, to the table of the Saviour.*

While the organ played a subdued and stately voluntary, the front rows of the congregation moved forward, and gathered round the Communion table in a semi-circle. Caste distinctions were put aside for the time. The servant took his place beside his master, and English governesses' bonnets mingled with the rich dresses of their aristocratic employers. A grand, cold scene it made, truly; harmonising well with the naked walls, the Holy bread, and the rest of the simple paraphernalia which seem so much more in keeping with the spirit of the Primitive Church than the elaborate sacramental feasts of the Catholics, with their embroidered altar-cloths and profusion of symbols.

The minister knelt in silent prayer for a few instants. The very first person he saw at his right hand on rising was Madame Autheman. Her tightly-closed lips, and the defiance written on her pale face, told plainly that she stood before him impenitent and rebellious, braving the man who had not feared to denounce her publicly. Aussandon grew pale too. He took the bread, broke it, and holding it above the basket while the murmuring tones of the organ grew fainter

and ebbed away in the distance, he repeated the familiar words of the service: *The bread we break is the Communion with the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

A little ungloved hand was here stretched out to him, quivering. But he appeared not to notice it, and, without stirring a muscle or turning his eyes to her, he said in a low voice:

'Where is Lina?'

No answer.

'Where is Lina?' again asked the minister; and this time she answered:

'I know not. God has called her.'

'Get you gone then, woman, from the table of our Lord, for you are not worthy to approach it,' said the minister, harshly.

All present heard him say it. All understood his gesture as he waved her away. While the basket was passed from hand to hand round the table, Jeanne Autheman, unflinching under the outrage as before, walked proudly through the opening ranks of the congregation, and disappeared. The minister was far more agitated, certainly, than she. It cost him quite an effort to lift the cup; and, at the close of the Communion service, after the sacred vessels had been cleared away, it was with a choking voice that he read the thanksgiving, and his aged hands trembled as he raised them to pronounce the benediction.

Generally, after service at the Oratory,

some of the friends and followers of the preacher dropped into the vestry to congratulate him on his sermon, and so give him fresh courage for his work. But that day Aussandon was left alone there, with the portraits and busts of the great Reformers. The embarrassment and mute disapproval written on the faces he saw as he passed through the people, had prepared him for his isolation. It is a serious matter to refuse to administer the Communion. He had overstepped the limits of his authority, and he knew he would have to pay dearly for it. A case of the same kind had occurred a few years before in Lyons. On that occasion the minister had been dismissed and his church closed. Thinking sadly enough of all this, the Dean stayed for some time, looking fixedly at an old, artless engraving on the vestry wall, representing a minister in the Desert, in some time of persecution. A whole people—citizens and peasants, aged men and children—on their knees before a black-robed preacher; and beyond them, in the distance, more men and women keeping watch. The picture brought back to his mind the bygone days when he had preached to his lowly flock among the basalt rocks and wide-spreading chestnuts of the Mézenc country. Well, let them dismiss him if they would. Let them refuse him even such a humble cure as that of Mondardier. What did it matter? Had he not the hovels of

the charcoal-burners to shelter him? Could he not worship God in the free air of heaven? Should he not have the cattle and the drovers for a congregation? . . . Aye, it was well enough for him; but there was Goody! Goody, whom he had been forgetting all this time. And in two days Goody would be back. . . . At the bare thought of the scene he must expect on her return, this steadfast minister, this instrument of God, who had but just now defied the vengeance of the Authemans, and done his duty, unshrinking, accepting the full consequences of his act—this man fell to trembling like a coward, and wondering confusedly in what way he should write to his angry little wife to prepare her for the coming blow.

He was roused by the sound of steps. The doorkeeper and his wife had entered the vestry unperceived, and were putting away the sacred utensils, keeping silent the while, as though they feared to compromise themselves by speaking to him. It is from your inferiors that you commonly get the first inkling of a coming downfall. 'Be it so!' sighed Aussandon, rising with an effort, and moving away to divest himself of his gown in the disrobing-room.

In the empty church you still heard, as it were, the deadened echoes and murmurs of the departed throng. A mere vibration, as of a steamer when the engines and the screw have stopped working. The shadows deep-

ened. The galleries stood out in dark relief against the naked walls. The heavy carpets which during service cover the floor between the Communion table and the deacons' bench were all rolled up and stored away. The lonely toilette of the church was finished, and the building had the lugubrious aspect of a theatre after the curtain has fallen.

Aussandon hurried on to the disrobing-room, reached the threshold and was about to enter, when before him, to his consternation, he saw his wife. His wife—there! She must have heard everything — seen everything. . . .

As the door creaked she darted forward, a terrible sight, with her projecting jaw and her bonnet threateningly cocked atop of her grey hair.

'Goody ——' stammered the poor, crushed Dean, entreatingly.

She gave him no time to add another word, but flung herself into his arms, sobbing.

'Ah, dear, dear, dear, brave husband!'

'Goody, you don't understand——'

But Goody understood every bit of it, and protested that the child-stealer had richly merited her chastisement.

The magic of a voice, his own voice, had brought about a miracle; for the little woman had a weak place in her grasping nature. She had a mother's heart, and he had found the way to it.

'Goody, Goody!' was all he could say.

Far too much moved for words, he took the wee creature to his heart and held her there, hiding her in the great folds of his black gown, as again and again he embraced her. Now they might cast him adrift when they chose, dismiss him, send him where they pleased, do with him what they would. Goody did not blame him. Hand-in-hand, and slowly, they would once more ascend the hill. Long might be the road, and steep. Their aged feet might totter and be very weary. Yet would they not be cast down; for they would journey on their way together, and the satisfaction that comes of duty fulfilled would give them strength.

CHAPTER XVI.

GABRIELLE'S SEAT.

LONG before the hour at which he usually left the Ministry, Lorie Dufresne one evening knocked excitedly at Madame Ebsen's door, and, having been admitted, carefully closed it again, looking so pale as he did so that he struck terror into the good woman's breast.

'What is wrong, M. Lorie?' she inquired.

'Madame Ebsen, you must go away at once. You must find some hiding-place. They are coming to arrest you!'

She stared at him in blank amazement, exclaiming, 'Arrest me? Me? Why should they arrest me?'

Lorie seemed afraid of his own voice; and it was in an inaudible tone he gasped out the terrible words, 'Madness. . . . Sequestration. . . . Special order. . . .'

'But I am not mad,' exclaimed the poor woman. 'How can they shut me up?'

'They have managed to get a certificate from Falconet. I have seen it.'

'A certificate? . . . Falconet? . . .'

'Yes; don't you remember? The mad-doctor you dined with once!'

'I dined with a mad ——,' she had began, when suddenly she stopped, with a loud cry of 'Oh, God!' as it flashed upon her that this Falconet must be the polite old gentleman with the red ribbon in his button-hole whom she had met one day at Birk's. Yes. Now she remembered how he had led her on at dinner to talk about Madame Autheman and St. Ignatius beans. The villain! The cruel villain! So this was the meaning of his mysterious threats. She was to be carried off and shut up amongst the mad women. She would be taken away to an asylum like the unhappy husband of that woman at Petit-Port. . . . A horrible fear took possession of her at the thought, and, turning to Lorie, trembling like a hunted child, she exclaimed:

'Oh, save me from them, M. Lorie! Don't leave me!'

Lorie did his best to tranquillise her. Leave her, indeed? He would not dream of it. But she must take refuge at some friend's, without a moment's delay. Perhaps Henriette Briss would shelter her. She was a little crazy, to be sure, but kind. If she was in Paris she would not refuse. That point being decided, he sent for a carriage at once; and, while it was being fetched, Madame Ebsen hurriedly packed up Eline's letters and portrait, some money, and a few other things, running to and fro in bewilderment, as people do at a fire, starting at every sound, and utterly panic-stricken. Her terror grew greater than ever when Madame Blot, the concièrge, who had gone for the carriage, informed her that a person who had called that same morning had been asking her all sorts of questions about her tenant, wanting to know exactly at what time she went out and came home.

'If the person returns,' said Lorie, interrupting her, 'say that Madame Ebsen has gone on a short journey.'

'Is she going to look for her daughter?' whispered the woman, who had not failed to remark Madame Ebsen's agitation and the signs of hasty packing which strewed the floor.

Lorie, delighted at having such a

plausible explanation at hand, nodded yes to her, and put his finger to his lips.

On reaching the street, Lorie—who, having been a Sous-préfet, knew something of the peculiar ways of the Service, and feared they might be followed—called out loudly to the coachman, 'Drive to the Gare de l'Est.' With the delightful deliberation of his class, Jehu slowly settled himself on the box, gathered up the reins, gave his horse a touch of his whip, and at last got under weigh, paying not the slightest attention to the impatience of Madame Ebsen, who, with her parcel on her knees, sat huddled up in a corner, facing Lorie.

Lorie was hardly less eager to start than she was, and he had good reason for his eagerness. That morning, as he sat in his office, with his huge tailors' scissors, cutting articles out of the daily papers which had been discussing the Minister, he had been summoned to Chemineau's room. In no branch of the Service is the work more complicated than in the police department of the Ministry of the Interior. Such divisions and subdivisions, such pigeon-holings and docketings! There is the *Public Worship* branch, the *Supervision of Foreigners* branch, the *Criminal Investigation* branch, the branch for the *Authorisation of Engravings*, the *Public Meetings, Associations, Political Refugees*, and *Gendarmerie* branches.

Doubtless out of compliment to the last-

named section of the Service, Chemineau had entirely altered his appearance since his promotion. He affected a sharp, curt way of speaking now; wore a fierce, waxed moustache, very much curled upwards, and a single eyeglass. Lorie gazed at him in dismay when he entered. He no longer bore any resemblance to his model.

'Bad business . . . my good fellow,' mumbled Chemineau, half of whose words seemed to stick in the waxed moustache. 'You know what I mean. Scandal at Oratory. Seen there with that mad woman!'

Lorie stoutly protested, declaring that his old friend was the victim of a gross injustice; but Chemineau cut him short.

'Mad, sir, mad. . . . March hare. . . . Dangerous lunatic. . . . Medical certificate. . . . Have her taken off to lunatic asylum. . . . Aussandon . . . in his dotage . . . dismissal gazetted in a few days. . . . As for you, my good fellow . . . lucky we're old acquaintances.'

Moved, apparently, by the recollections awakened by his own words, Chemineau planted himself in front of his old comrade, looked him full in the face, and rated him well for his imprudence.

'What a fool you must be,' said he, 'to quarrel with the Authemans, the most respectable and wealthy people in all Paris! You, too, above all—a man compromised in the affair of the 16th of May, who ought

to be so very careful not to get into any fresh scrape. Wasn't one lesson enough for you? Do you really want to starve with your brats, then?'

The unfortunate man grew ghastly at the idea, for in fancy he saw himself copying plays again for the Dramatic Agency. Nor was it till Chemineau waved him out with the cold injunction 'not to get up to any more nonsense, or he would be thrown over,' that he took heart of grace again.

On the way from the Rue du Val-de-Grâce to the railway station, and back from the railway station to Henriette's rooms in the Rue de Sèvres, Lorie described the whole scene to Madame Ebsen. Chemineau had made such an impression on him that he caught himself repeating, not only his very words, but even his harsh and hissing intonations. To be sure, he did not tell Madame Ebsen he would throw her over; but he dinned into her ear over and over that the Authemans were too strong for them, too respectable, and warned her against indulging in any more nonsense. Poor soul! she had little spirit for nonsense, with the dreadful prospect of the asylum and the mad women weighing her down and crushing her.

They did not reach Henriette's till dusk. She lived in a house inhabited almost entirely by workmen, and to get to her rooms you had to go up an ill-smelling, smooth,

stone staircase. Stenches were there of all kinds. The least offensive were, perhaps, those which came from the baker's downstairs, and from what seemed to be a house-painter's on the second floor. Here they halted at a door on which stood the words—*Magnabos, Decorative Painter.*

A youthful-looking woman, with a large school-girl's apron on and a cold water bandage tied round her forehead, opened the door to them, holding a palette in one hand and a gilder's knife in the other.

'Is Mademoiselle Briss in?'

No! Mademoiselle Briss had gone out to buy her dinner, but she would be back directly. Indeed, here she was already, coming up the stairs.

A ray of light stole into the antechamber just then, through the half-open door of a large workshop filled with hundreds and hundreds of little altar statuettes gay with gilding and showy colour. Henriette's room was on the same landing. They found it all in disorder. The bed was still unmade and loaded with newspapers. Knives and forks and glasses were placed pell-mell upon the table, next to an inkstand and several sheets of paper covered with large blotted handwriting. A rosary was suspended from the looking-glass, over a tiny image of St. John holding a lamb in his arms, and badly in want of dusting. Everything was characteristic of the odd and

irregular creature who, by some strange freak of fortune, had become the owner of the little, cell-like room, dimly lighted from above a narrow courtyard, which at night was brightened by the glowing panes of the bakery. Opposite the window, so near that you could almost touch it, rose a grim and melancholy wall, covered from top to bottom with stains and fissures which seemed to say, as plainly as stains and fissures could, Disease and Want, Want and Disease, Disease and Want.

'You here?' exclaimed Henriette, entering with her loaf and the dish which the baker had just been baking for her. 'How good of you to come and see me!'

On hearing what was the object of their visit, she at once told them that the bed and the bedroom were at their disposal. She could sleep on the sofa herself, and pass Madame Ebsen off as an aunt from Christiania.

'We shall be quite comfortable. There are no children, and the Magnaboses are excellent people. . . . Magnabos is a free-thinker, to be sure, but such an enthusiast! We are always wrangling.'

In a trice she had tossed Madame Ebsen's parcel into a drawer, lighted her little petroleum lamp, and placed a pewter knife and fork and a cracked plate upon the table. When Lorie left them seated at dinner, Madame Ebsen seemed somewhat

calmer. As for Henriette, she was chattering even more than usual in the excitement caused by the events of the day, and still more, perhaps, by the electric air of Paris, which was far stronger than her poor, feeble brain could stand.

Paris terrified Lorie now. Never till that day had he sounded its treacherous depths. As he walked slowly back to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce after dinner, it seemed to him that the ground beneath him was mined and might at any moment yawn to his destruction. The stories he had read and disbelieved were true, then. Such things might really be. . . . And yet he knew that Madame Ebsen was not mad. . . . Would they have dared to shut her up in an asylum, or was it only a threat to keep her quiet?'

When he got home, he found a man seated on the doorstep waiting for him. Suspecting mischief, he stopped short, and inquired, 'Who's there?' The hoarse, mournful voice of Romain answered him. What new misfortune could have happened, thought Lorie. How came Romain to be in Paris at such an hour? That morning Romain had, as he soon learnt, been discharged, for some pretended negligence. Never doubting there must be some mistake in the matter, the Lock-keeper had taken the first train to Paris and hastened to the offices of the Ponts et

Chaussées, hoping to set things right. But they had merely confirmed the news and refused him any explanation. He was discharged—for negligence—and Baraquin was to replace him. The Lock would be well attended to when Baraquin had charge of it, with a vengeance.

The name of Jeanne Autheman was on the tip of Lorie's tongue; but Romain saved him the trouble of uttering it.

'It's all the Authemans' doing,' said he, 'Ah, they're a wicked lot, those Authemans!'

For some time past, it appeared, war had been declared between the Château and the Lock. Young Nicolas, having one day rashly ventured on the enemy's territory, was waylaid and cuffed so soundly by Sylvanire that he had been unable to stir a limb for a week after. This led to a report of the *garde-champêtre*, followed by a summons to appear before the Court at Corbeil. But all this could not be twisted into neglect of duty, said the Lock-keeper, who seemed much less distressed at losing his place than at the idea of being separated from Sylvanire; for, of course, the children would have to go home to their father, and he knew his wife would go with them. He was resigned, but it was hard. The clock at St. Jacques struck the hour just as Romain reached this point, and, as he did not wish to miss his train, he was obliged to start. He brushed away a tear from his little eyes, threw all his sorrow

into one '*Cré cochon*, M. Lorie!' and, with this, departed.

Life at the Magnabos's was sad and lonely enough for Madame Ebsen. Henriette, who was very much excited over the decrees against the religious congregations, spent most of her time running from one convent to another. Meanwhile the poor mother, who dared not venture out, was left to her own resources in that miserable room. She did what she could to make it comfortable; but the task was hopeless. A dozen times a day her companion would burst in like a whirlwind, undoing all that she had done to set things in order. How different it seemed from the snug little home in the Rue du Val-de-Grâce!

She would sit there for hours watching the cracks and stains on the wall. Disease, Want, it said to her; Want, Disease. When she grew tired of that, sometimes she would go into the workshop next door and try to while away the tedious day with the Magnaboses.

Magnabos, of l'Ariège (for so he styled himself), was a fat, squat, bearded man of any age from thirty-five to fifty, with a pair of frog-like eyes and the deep, hollow voice of a stage villain. In a way he was a celebrity, and had been the ornament of many a public meeting at the hall in the Rue d'Arras and elsewhere. But he excelled in

funeral orations. No freethinker's funeral of any importance would have been considered a success without a speech at the tomb from the celebrated Magnabos. The comparative rarity of these lugubrious ceremonies giving him, however, far fewer opportunities of publicly distinguishing himself than he would have liked, he had joined a Masonic Lodge and enrolled himself a member of the Freethinkers' League. He lay in wait, so to speak, at the friendly gatherings of the two societies, carefully watching the sick and aged members, and measuring them for their funeral orations as though for a coffin. He knew exactly what, from a panegyrical point of view, might be the value of each man of them; and when at last any one did drop off, Magnabos was equal to the occasion. In all seasons and weathers, wet or dry, Magnabos might have been seen in the wake of the grave diggers, wearing a branch of immortelles in his button-hole, or a blue scarf—an impressive figure, truly, and a corpulent, never at a loss for words. Always ready with a pompous phrase or two. They did not mean much, to be sure, but there they were. He came at last to have the true sacerdotal ring. His language grew more and more unctuous; his action more and more emphatic. The priest-eating, priest-hating Magnabos gradually developed into a priest himself—a minister of the religion of Freethought.

He conformed to its rites and formulas, pocketed his stipend, ate the good dinners he was invited to by the mourners, and was careful not to refuse his travelling expenses when they were offered him. For Magnabos was something of a commercial traveller as well as a priest. His line was funeral orations, and business often took him as far as Poissy, Mantes, and even Vernon. If the freethinking connection had only known that their immaculate high priest earned his living by painting plaster and cardboard religious emblems and images for the 'Clerical' shopkeepers in the Rue Bonaparte and the Rue St. Sulpice, what a fall would there have been for the great Magnabos! Well, a man must live; and after all he did so little to his 'Manitous,' as he called them. Most of the work was done by his wife, who wielded the brush and paint-pot quite as skilfully as he himself. She was a true Parisian work-girl, with a pretty face that had grown worn and sickly through late hours and the suffering caused by persistent nervous headaches. From morning till night, and often far into the night, Magnabos had to stay in the pestilential atmosphere of the workshop, painting whole processions of white, expressionless saints and Madonnas; giving an ecstatic look and a dab of blue paint to one; putting a little gaudy colour into the face of another; adorning the head of a third with a gilded mahogany halo; and

powdering them all with glittering stars, wherever there appeared to be a slit or a seam in their saintly vestments.

Madame Ebsen usually preferred the wife's society to the husband's. It amused her to watch her cutting out the thin gold sheets for the ornaments, and putting the colour on the images (after she had first oiled and resined them) with her deft and dexterous little fingers. While she worked, she would chat away enthusiastically about the marvellous abilities and achievements of her Magnabos. She was always full of some new speech he had made at the grave of a friend or fellow-freethinker; and with it all so kind and even-tempered, though the great man did come home now and then—after a grand funeral—a bit the worse for an extra glass. Ah, she was a lucky wife! often said the plucky little woman. And yet at that very moment she might have her eyes closed, and her hand pressed against her head, suffering atrociously; thanks to the tiara of St. Ambroise she had been painting.

One thing alone was wanting to complete her happiness—a child. Not a boy. 'Boys always leave you,' said she. No. A girl, christened Mathilda, with curly hair like St. John's, who would keep her company all day long in the workshop.

'But the happiest of us has some trouble,' said she one morning to the pretended

aunt of Henriette. 'Had you ever a child, Madame?'

'Yes,' murmured Madame Ebsen.

'A daughter?'

No answer came. Looking round, she saw the poor creature with her face buried in her hands, sobbing.

That's why she is always so sad then, and never goes out, thought Madame Magnabos. She took it for granted that her neighbour's daughter was dead, and never from that time said anything of curly-headed little Mathilda.

In the evening Henriette generally joined them, and sometimes Magnabos, too, when there was a pressure of work and no meeting. Very venerable looked the huge orator as he stood in the stuffy, stove-heated room with his wife, painting the saints and blessed martyrs. Very imposing, indeed, with his flat, pomaded locks, and that long beard of his—which always seemed too black somehow—spread out over the long, grey blouse which he filled with the majesty of his presence. He might have passed for an Armenian priest, or an Archimandrite. But he was not above a joke, despite his sanctified air and gravity of manner. 'Come and have your halo stuck on, will you?' he would say to some mitred bishop as he stuck him up comically in front of him. It was an old joke, but it never failed to elicit a smile from his wife, and a protesting, 'Oh, M. Magnabos!'

from Henriette. Then the battle would begin. The deep bass voice of the great orator, and the shrill treble of Henriette, thundered and screamed, and screamed and thundered again. Strange names and words went floating out of the window—such as eternity, matter, superstition, sensualism—to the intense astonishment of the passing omnibus-drivers. Atheist and Catholic borrowed their arguments from the same sources. Both quoted the Fathers of the Church and the Encyclopædists. But Magnabos had the advantage over Henriette, as he kept his temper better. He denied the existence of God dogmatically, but he did so calmly, and the process of yellow-ochreing St. Joseph's beard, or St. Perpetua's tresses, went on as methodically as ever. Occasionally, Lorie-Dufresne tried to reconcile the opponents. He had read a good deal about Protestantism of late, and, in the condescending, cautious manner which became a State servant, he did his best to still the troubled waters, and give his hearers the benefit of much profound, though recent, erudition, which rather exasperated them than otherwise.

In a dark corner where her tears could flow unnoticed, silent and motionless as the little statuettes ranged meekly round the walls, Madame Ebsen sat listening, as in nightmare, while the mighty Magnabos blus-

tered and declared that the knell of privileges and prerogatives had sounded. Listening, she pondered in her heart over the vanity of all religious distinctions, and wondered bitterly that men should use all religions as cloaks for wickedness and injustice.

Magnabos was mistaken. One privilege has survived the destruction of so many others. A privilege stronger than them all; a tyranny towering above laws and revolutions; greater than ever for the ruin that surrounds it. Money. The modern force, the leveller, the unconscious, passive, omnipotent destroyer. Yes, passive. The poor mother hiding there, like a criminal; the aged minister, dismissed for having done his duty; poor Romain, unjustly discharged from his Lock; not one of them had any idea how small a hand the Authemans had had in their misfortunes. It had all happened without their stirring a finger. The natural force of things; the weight of their gold; the grovelling meanness of the idol-worshippers; were alone to blame. While so much base and cruel work was being done in their name, they were leading honest and peaceful lives, as usual. Madame was at Port-Sauveur, where the first happy days of her married life had been spent. Monsieur was at his post, behind the office railings, at the very source of the pellucid, inexhaustible

springs, which kept the golden river on a level with its lofty banks. At five o'clock every evening the carriage called for Autheman, and whirled him away to his wife. So punctual was his departure, that the clerks used to set their watches by his carriage wheels; and at exactly five o'clock, relaxed the gloomy expression which their faces invariably wore while the banker was in the office. Great was their surprise, therefore, when one fine June afternoon, Autheman signed all the letters at three, and got ready to go.

'I'm going upstairs,' said he to one of the porters. 'Tell Pierre to harness the horses, and let me know directly he is ready.'

'Hope you're not ill, sir?' inquired the porter.

No. He was not more ill to-day than any other day. Slowly, rubbing his swollen cheek abstractedly as he went, he ascended the broad staircase, while the sound of his own footsteps echoed drearily through the house as though he had been in an old church; entered the sombre apartment, vaster and more dismal than ever now with its closed shutters and bare floors; passed through the solemn parlour in which the prayer-meetings were held; marked the depressing presence of the texts upon the walls, and the long rows of benches piled one on the top of the other, and the writing-desk, with its orderly green letter-boxes;

passed on again through the stately drawing-room, with its furniture, in the style of the First Empire, tied up in the chilly white wrappers which were so suggestive of the costumes of that period; and at last stopped in front of a high door adorned with forbidding wood-carving—the pitiless door of his wife's room, which for four years had been locked and closed against him. . . .

He had submitted to it in silence, refusing to owe his happiness to anything but her own generosity. How many nights he had spent since then, in the frozen and desolate drawing-room, listening to the regular sound of Jeanne's breathing, telling himself 'She is weary of me! She loathes me!' And then in sheer desperation he had gone from one surgeon to another, as in his wretched boyhood, seeking relief and a cure for the horrible hereditary disfigurement on his face. Do what they would, it resisted all their medicines. He underwent an operation. But hardly was the hideous spot cut out, when it came again, larger and more repulsive than before, spreading over one whole cheek like a huge, livid spider. At last Autheman abandoned the struggle. Humiliated, reckless, half beside himself with rage and hopeless love, he plunged headlong into dissipation. . . . He soon tired of it, however. So delicate and pure-minded a lover could not delight in vulgar vice. He turned away from it in disgust. For him

there was but one woman in the world, and that woman was his wife—who had steeled her heart against compassion.

So now he had resolved to die. Yes, to die. Death, the last consoler of the God-forsaken, should end it all. A cruel, horrible, avenging death. One of those self-murders which bespatter the street pavements with human flesh, stain the railings round the public monuments with human blood, and crush the life out of the poor, suffering, miserable, human body, with groans and blasphemy. He would kill himself that evening at Port-Sauveur, close to Jeanne. But first he would take a long, last farewell of this bedroom.

It was a large room, daintily hung with pale grey silk, almost of the same shade as the gilded panels. The immateriality of the woman who lived in it was seen in the extreme cleanliness of the hangings, and in the neatness of the lacquered, dove-coloured furniture, which seemed not a whit less new now than they were on the wedding-day eleven years before. Poor Autheman, whom no one, even his mother, had ever called by his Christian name, like other people! Poor Autheman the rich! Poor monster! Lying there on the death-like bed with the heavy drapery, what cries of fury and despair he stifled under the pillow and the curtains! Who that had seen him then, sobbing like a little child, would have recognised him a few

minutes later, in the carefully-gloved, well-dressed, gentlemanly, and eminently respectable Autheman whom the servant found standing before the parrot's cage in the antechamber, when he announced that the carriage was waiting!

Parrot and cage were taken down to Port-Sauveur regularly every year, much to Anne de Beuil's scandal. It made her frantic to hear the heretical old bird croak her 'Moses! Moses!' in those Evangelical shades. This year, however, whether by design or accident, the parrot had been forgotten; and it lay now stark and cold at the end of the cage, with its claws drawn together convulsively, and its luckless head reflected in the bit of broken looking-glass, beside the empty bath and seedless dishes. Never again will it call Moses. Israel has fled from the renegade mansion.

Autheman stared at it all thoughtfully for a moment, walked downstairs as though it did not concern him, and, opening his watch, quietly bade the coachman drive as fast as he could. 'I am in a hurry, Pierre,' said he; and away rolled the brougham, through the streets and along the quays of that melancholy black mass of smoking chimneys, poverty-stricken workmen's houses, and timber-yards, the Faubourg d'Ivry. A sordid and rebellious quarter, that greets the few carriages which traverse it with handfuls of mud and disrespectful puffs of foul vapour.

But it mattered very little to the banker. Neither smoke nor mud disturbed him much, for wherever he drove, even amongst the sunny hills and the cornfields, the blinds of his brougham always hid him from his fellows like a leper. Until the lodge gates of his park were passed, the rich man was no better than a prisoner. He did not breathe freely till he found himself in the perfume-laden air and sleepy silence of Port-Sauveur.

'Where is your mistress?' inquired Autheman, abruptly, as the horse drew up at the gate, snorting proudly, but panting and foaming.

'In the park, Sir, at Gabrielle's Seat.'

Often in the sweet-smelling summer evenings must fair Gabrielle have whispered words of love, as she sat on this round, mossy seat nestling among the lindens which overhung the top of the great stone staircase. Often must she have murmured sweet nothings here, and listened to the humming of the bees. To Jeanne Autheman, however, Gabrielle's seat was merely an observatory. When she was not in the Retreat she came here to hold communion with God, and watch the servants. From her post of vantage amongst the branches she could see every corner of the park, the stiff, straight lines of the hedges, the flower-beds, and the kitchen gardens which ran along the railway. The servants knew this well enough; and when they heard that 'Madame was in her

tree,' they did their work accordingly, and the Château looked more sedate and clean, if that were possible, than at other times.

'Whosoever would commune with the Lord, let him forget all created things and perishable creatures.'

The voice which the banker heard enunciating this pious maxim was Jeanne's. It was answered by the sobs of poor Watson, who had returned from the Mission wellnigh broken-hearted, and hungering for the sight of the children she had forsaken. Jeanne, who had 'received the gift of strength from Christ Jesus,' was reproving her for her weakness, heedless of her moans and tears.

'Good evening,' said she, when she saw her husband. And with this she was about to resume the admonition which his arrival had interrupted; but he stopped her.

'I wish to speak to you, Jeanne,' said he, peremptorily.

She saw at once by the flashing of his eye and the feverish grasp of his hand, as he caught her by the wrist, that the time for the long-deferred explanation had come.

'You may go, my daughter,' said she to Watson; and waited for him to begin, with that dreadful, wearied expression upon her face which women assume when they are expecting to be spoken to of love, and do not love the man who is about to speak of it.

'Why do you withdraw your hand,

Jeanne?' murmured Autheman, sitting down beside her. 'Why do you take away what you have given? . . . Yes, yes, you know what I mean, for all those lying looks of yours,' he continued. 'You were my wife; why have you ceased to be so?'

Then, with burning, passionate words, he tried to make her understand all that she had been to him; what a great place she occupied in his life. He told her of his lonely and sickly childhood, and of his unhappy youth. Told her how, in the days when most creatures have the joyous sense of power and love, he had felt like some hideous, hunted insect that has to hide continually under stones to avoid destruction. Told her how, when she had at last appeared to him, she had shed such radiance around her that fresh life and courage had come into him. His very torture, as he had watched her talking under the hedges with Deborah, and sickened at the thought that she would refuse him, had been sweet, for was not she the cause of it?

'Do you remember, Jeanne,' said he, 'the day mother called to ask for your hand? I passed the whole afternoon here, on this very seat, waiting very patiently and calmly, Jeanne. "If she refuses me I will kill myself," I was thinking. The way and the place were quite settled . . . Look at me well, Jeanne. You know I am no vain talker . . . Here I sit with you where I sat

alone eleven years ago, and just as firmly resolved to die now if you refuse to listen to me . . . I have chosen the time and the place . . . My life is in your hands. Choose.'

Knowing how earnest and sincere he was, she carefully avoided uttering the 'No' so plainly written in her eyes, and in the instinctive shrinking of her whole nature. Gently she reminded him of his Christian duty; spoke of faith, the soother and comforter; and God's laws, which forbade self-murder.

'God! You are my God, Jeanne,' he passionately ejaculated, and each word had the sound of a kiss. 'God! Your mouth, your breath, those arms of yours which once embraced me, Jeanne—this fair white shoulder on which I have so often fallen asleep—all this is my God. While I sat in the church you took me to, my thoughts were full of you. As I worked on, wearing my eyes out over those figures, my heart was full of you. You gave me strength to work. You gave me zeal to pray . . . And now you have taken all from me. How can I ever believe in you again? How can I endure my life?'

On that she rose, indignant at the idea of his daring to blaspheme in her presence. Her cheeks flushed with the heat of the righteous wrath permitted by the Scriptures. *Be angry, and sin not.*

'Stop!' she cried. 'Not another word.

I thought you had understood me better . . . God and my work call me . . . To all else I am dead!'

Very beautiful looked Jeanne Autheman as she stood there quivering with passion (she who was usually so unmoved), with the sprigs of linden falling about her black, disordered tresses. He gazed at her for a moment, rapt in admiration; then cast a downward glance of dreadful irony at the bandage which hid his disfigurement. Could it be true that God was the only obstacle? Might she not have a lover? . . . He longed to be able to despise her, and have a lower object for his jealousy . . . Lover or no lover, though, he knew she was implacable.

'As I expected,' said he, rising, and speaking in his ordinary quiet, business-like tones. 'I knew it would be useless, but I wished to avoid all chance of misunderstanding.'

He turned to go—then stopped—'Never, Jeanne?' . . . said he.

'Never.'

Whither can he be bound? thought Jeanne. How strangely he had looked at his watch, as he hurried away, like a man afraid of missing an appointment. Well, let him go. God punisheth the rebellious spirit. So putting him aside, she began praying, to still the emotion which had so shaken her, and efface the earthy stain which his coarse

appeal had left upon her pure soul. And as she prayed she grew calmer.

Evening wore on, night shivered amongst the branches, and swarms of great heart-moths began to settle on the geraniums. Gradually the flower-beds became indistinct, and the darkness deepened. The moon had not yet risen, and now nothing was visible but the straight, glistening railway line, lighted by the two flaming lamps coming round the bend in the river.

The evening express!

It passed with a rush and a clatter, while Jeanne slowly went down to her dinner, murmuring the last verse of her prayer. And ere she went in she turned, watching the train disappear in the night. Nor did the fear once trouble her, as she watched, that she stood there at that moment—a widow.

They found him that same evening, after distractedly searching for him up and down the line with lanterns. He had placed his hat and gloves and cane carefully together on the terrace. Crushed and bleeding fragments of the body had been scattered here and there along the rails. The only part of it intact was the head. The bandage had been torn from the face, however, and on it you could see, more dreadful than ever, the hideous black spider, still remorseless, still stretching out its great, cruel form over its prey.

CHAPTER XVII.

'LEAVE YOU? . . NEVER, OH, NEVER, MOTHER!'

MADAME EBSEN grew less afraid of her persecutor as time went on. She began to go out again, knowing that the d'Arlots were back in Paris, and would protect her if any fresh attempt were made to carry her off to an asylum. Yet she had to keep very quiet; for the banker's tragic end, and the resolute spirit of his widow, who was carrying on the business with a cleverness worthy of the daughter-in-law of old Madame Autheman, had brought about a considerable change in public opinion, and Jeanne had regained much of the sympathy she had lost. For that matter, the poor mother felt little inclination to renew her attempt to get back her child. Fear and those long months of suspense had crushed the courage out of her: and she was fain to say, like the peasant at Petit-Port, 'It's no good trying.'

As she did not dare to return to the Rue du Val-de-Grâce, she remained in Henriette's room, which she had all to herself now. For Henriette, who had come to the end of her funds, had gone off—this time to Albania. She herself had been obliged to take to teaching again. It helped her to drag on through the day; but her evenings hung dreadfully on her hands, and she often

missed her excitable and garrulous companion.

Magnabos was ill, too. The great orator had taken a chill at the funeral of a political brother, and had been confined to his bed ever since with a feverish cold, and a nasty cough which made the Manitous tremble where they stood on the shelves. Madame Magnabos had rather a bad time of it as she gilded her little saints and virgins, for it made the great man very bad-tempered to think of all the friends who must be dying and getting buried without him.

She would be sad, wherever she went, thought Madame Ebsen; so why not stay where she was, and watch the cracks in the walls of her wretched room grow wider and wider? Her mind was full of her child still, and she had given up trying to forget. 'Where is she? What is she doing?' she was always wondering. She got no letters now, and was obliged to content herself by reading and re-reading the cold, cruel messages she had received in the early days of her isolation. Amongst them was the postal card, on which she had written, *My child's last letter to me.* Even a card would have satisfied her—even a line—nay, a word, so that the word was 'Eline.'

She missed Lorie, too. He had been called away to Amboise to wind up the affairs of the Gailletons, who had died within a week or two of each other. During his

absence she called once or twice at Madame Blot's to see whether she had any news to give her; but she did not stay long, never went up to her own apartment, or stopped to kiss Fanny and Maurice, who had remained in Paris with Sylvanire. She had not quite been able to get rid of her fear of being carried off, even yet, and looked back a dozen times, whenever she ventured into the lonely street, to see that nobody was dogging her.

One day as she put her head in at the door, and asked the usual desponding question, 'Nothing for me to-day, Madame Blot?' the concièrge rushed out in great excitement and exclaimed, 'There is, though; I should think so, indeed! Your daughter is upstairs. She has just this moment arrived!'

How did she find strength to go up, and turn the key in the lock, and drag herself into the room?

'My child!' she sobbed. 'My own dear, dear little daughter!'

She took her in her arms, and wept silently over her; and Eline stood there while she wept, cold and still, and looking strangely thin in her black straw bonnet and loose waterproof.

'Oh, my pretty Lina!' cried her mother, unclasping her arms for a moment to examine her. 'How they have changed you!'

She flung herself on her neck again, with a sob like the gasp of a drowning man who has been restored to air and life.

'Don't go away again, oh don't! . . . I could not bear it.'

Nestling close to her, so that her very reproaches were gentle as a kiss, she told her of her terrible sorrow, and frenzied search, and how they had tried to take her away to the madhouse.

'Hush, hush!' said Eline. 'God has permitted me to return. Let us give thanks to Him, without repining.'

'Yes, yes,' replied the mother. 'You are right.'

Now that her child had come back, what did it matter? Had even that infamous wretch, Birk himself, been there at that moment, she would have kissed his Judas face in her gratitude. She had her Lina again—all to herself. She could hold her in her arms, and hear her soft tread as she walked about in the home that had seemed dead and was alive again. She followed her from room to room, and helped her to unpack her boxes. And when they sat down together—together—to the little dinner that had been hurriedly prepared, their hands and looks met, as in the old days, and all bitterness was swept away in perfect bliss.

Downstairs in the garden, which the sunset was gilding, they heard the laughter of the children, who had taken strange

liberties with the flower-beds and evergreens since Pastor Aussandon's rooms had been shut up and a great board with 'To let' on it had been hung on the wall of the house. But Eline never thought of them, and hardly distinguished the sound of their voices from the noisy chirping of the sparrows. Madame Ebsen did not dare to speak to her of the past, for she did not know what her daughter's plans were, and she feared lest, by some imprudence, she should snap the frail thread of her marvellous joy. The greatest happiness is not quite free from anguish.

They only spoke about the Dean. Poor man, what pain it must have given him to tear himself away from this peaceful spot—to leave the garden he had planted with his own hands—to forsake his favourite roses and the old cherry-tree, of which he used to be so proud, as he carefully picked the few sour cherries it bore; such dusty town cherries, black with dust and soot, which had to be washed away before you could set them on the table! Madame Ebsen almost imagined she saw the old couple going away, with their small store of worldly goods, to live with one of their married children in some quiet corner of the provinces. She thought of the good minister patiently waiting to find some humble living, and willing to endure once more all the privations he had known at the beginning

of his long career. Yet he was at the top of the hill, and would gladly have rested from his labours. And all this trouble had come upon him because he alone, in all Paris, had had the courage to lift up his voice against the cruelty and injustice done her.

'Ah Linette! If you had only heard him preach that day! It was so beautiful, so like God's voice speaking, that you would have come back at once, you bad child.' The next instant, fearing she had given offence, she took her by the hand and kissed her, saying, 'I was only joking, dear.'

Eline made no answer; she seemed abstracted and tired. Her pale face told of much suffering and weariness. 'It's the journey,' thought her mother; and, though she evidently had no wish to talk that evening, she could not refrain from questioning her as to her adventures. She was burning to know where her child had been all that time, and whence she had come. But she got only vague and embarrassed answers to her inquiries. She gathered that Eline had been ill at Zurich for a full month, and that she had done good work at Manchester. Every now and again she introduced a pious exhortation into the conversation. 'Let us suffer with Christ, mother,' said she, 'that we may reign with Him.' 'Oh, my little Lina! How they have changed you!' was the only reply the good woman made.

Well! The chief thing was to have her there, in the little bedroom next her own, to which Lina retired very early, alleging that she was tired. Madame Ebsen, on the contrary, being anxious to return to her old ways and habits, sat up late putting things in order, stopping frequently to enjoy the delightful sensation of being at home and at peace after many hours of loneliness and despair.

All was still in the street. Over the tree-tops in the garden came the sound of the clock striking the hour at St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, mingled with faint echoes of the violins at Bullier. Nothing stirred in Eline's room, though a light still shone at her window.

'She has forgotten to put it out,' thought Madame Ebsen, stealing in on tiptoe.

Her child was kneeling on the stone floor, with her head back, and her arms stretched out rigidly, as though imploring pardon.

'Leave me alone with God, mother!' said Eline curtly, and without turning her head, as the door creaked.

But her mother clung to her, and pressed her wildly to her heart.

'Don't talk like that, my darling child!' she exclaimed. 'Don't be angry with me, or I shall fear you are going to leave me!'

And suddenly, loosening her hold of the girl, she fell on her knees, too, heavily.

Oh Lina!' she cried, 'I will pray with you . . . Only tell me what to say!'

When the sun shines full upon a house, it warms and brightens every floor. Is happiness like the sunshine?

A day or two after Eline's return, Madame Ebsen had a letter from Lorie to say that he had inherited all that the Gailletons had left behind them. It was not much, for they had sunk most of their money in an annuity; but there was the house (which he intended to sell), and the vineyard, and the cottage—which he thought of keeping for the children, Romain, and Sylvanire. His letter was written from the very room, facing the great tower of the Château, in which his poor martyr had died, said Lorie. Maurice, he went on, would pursue his studies for the Naval School in the College at Amboise. Poor Maurice! You were fated to be the victim of a vocation.

At the end of the letter, after all the news, was a timid postscript.

'So you have found your child again. Had you been able to tell me that I had any hope of a share in your great joy, I know you would have written. Yet tell her that my heart has never changed, and that my little ones are still motherless.'

This is the simple and ingenuous letter which Madame Ebsen wrote to him in answer to that postscript:

'Lorie, my friend, she is my child, and yet she is not my child. She is sweet and submissive, ready to do anything you ask of her, but cold and indifferent, as though something in her heart had snapped; and, indeed, I often think her heart has stopped. Sometimes I take her in my arms to warm her, and exclaim, "You are all I have in life, my darling child! And what is life without love?" She makes no answer, or she tells me that we should love each other in Christ, and care for nothing but our salvation. She cares for little else herself, truly, and her whole time is given over to prayer and edifying books.

'At first she used to go about amongst our friends; but now she never stirs from the house, and does not even talk of pupils. I don't know what she thinks of doing. Meanwhile I am working for both of us. Oh, I can wait! She may rest as long as she likes, for, God be praised, since her return I have felt like a girl of twenty. . . . I am sorry I cannot hold out much hope to you, either. After I received your letter, I went to fetch Fanny (whom she had not seen since her return), hoping the child's pretty ways and the sight of the soft tresses she once loved to stroke, would touch her heart. But, alas! she received the child as if she had been an utter stranger—gave her an icy kiss, like those I get from her—and talked to her the whole time of God, and the need

of the Gospel light. Poor Fanny got quite frightened.

'I have not lost all hope, even now, of curing my daughter of her terrible disease—the disease of being loveless. It is but a question of time and tenderness. Listen to this, my friend! Last night as I was weeping quietly in bed (for it is a sad thing to lose your child alive), I fancied I heard a sob in the next room; I got up at once, and found Lina in bed, awake. It was dark in her room. "What ails you, my pet?" said I. "Nothing—nothing, mother," said Lina. But I kissed her, and, as I did so, I felt her cheeks wet with tears.

Oh, my friend, can you imagine anything sadder than this mother and this daughter, weeping, with the night between them? . . . But, for all that, she wept. Maybe her heart is awakening. And if she gave me her heart again, she would give it to you and to your children.' . . .

On the 15th of July, about three weeks after Eline's return, Madame Ebsen, who had been to bid good-bye to the last of her pupils remaining in Paris, called to ask how Magnabos was.

'Ill, very ill,' hoarsely replied the great orator, who, alas! had quite lost his voice. He turned, not without difficulty, to his wife, who was quietly shedding tears on the blue robes of St. Rigobert. 'Above all,' he said,

'I implore you not to let any one make a speech over my tomb. . . . I won't have any. . . . None of them could make a good one.'

He got quite lively the next minute over the national fête of the previous day.

'What did you think of it, Madame Ebsen?' said the orator. 'Wasn't it grand? What a row they did make, to be sure!'

'I heard them in the distance,' replied Madame Ebsen. 'But I did not see much. . . . Lina would not go out.'

'Would not go out?' muttered Magnabos, indignantly. 'Not go out on the fête day of the people? . . . The day on which we celebrate the overthrow of superstitions and privileges? I'd have made her illuminate, curse her.'

'Don't get so hot about it, dear,' said poor Madame Magnabos, who was very anxious lest he should lose the one lung that he had left. She did not ask her to go, but the look in her eye was so eloquent that Madame Ebsen rose at once, and went out into the streets, where the flags were still flying, and the evergreens, though much damaged by the rain, still invited the people to be merry. The sight of the dying man she had left, or the sorrow of his noble wife, or the sadness which invariably follows rejoicing, quite upset Madame Ebsen, whose legs grew strangely tired as she walked along in the close air of the city streets.

The Luxembourg garden seemed un-

familiar and forbidding as she walked through it, and glanced at the vulgar display of tricolour lamps and Chinese lanterns, or, rather, what was left of them. She walked quickly, for she was anxious to get away from the sadness of the streets, and be home again with her child.

'Lina! Lina!'

Eline's door was locked, and it was not till her mother had called to her twice that the girl came out, dressed, as though for a journey, and looking even paler than usual in the hat she wore, with the broad black strings she wore tied under her chin. Beside her, on a chair, was her portmanteau.

'Eline, where are you going?' cried Madame Ebsen.

'God calls me, mother,' replied Eline. 'I must obey His voice.'

This time her mother did not utter a cry, or shed a tear. She saw what a shameless trick had been played her; saw, too, that Eline had been allowed to go home for a time, only to show people she was a free agent, and answer the accusation of old Aussandon. Now that the desired impression had been made, what mattered it whether her mother died of the shock or no? She must go. It was too much.

'Go! if you will. I have no longer a child,' said the mother, in a hoarse and terrible voice.

For some time after that, the two women stood there without looking at each other,

erect and speechless, while the carriage was being fetched.

It seemed a long time coming, and yet it may have been only a minute. For when men and women are at death's door, minutes may seem ages.

'Farewell, mother; I will write to you,' said Lina.

'Farewell!' said her mother.

Their cheeks touched coldly for a moment as they kissed. Yet, cold as it was, at the touch something in Eline's heart awoke, and the mother heard what seemed the abortion of a sob rise to her daughter's lips.

'Stay with me, then, my child!'

She opened her arms to her daughter—opened them wide. But Eline, in a voice, wild and hoarse as her own, exclaimed, 'No, no. I must go, for your salvation and my own. Though it rend our hearts, yet will I save you, mother!'

Madame Ebsen stood there, motionless, listening to the light step going down the stairs. The daughter did not once look back when she got into the carriage. The mother never lifted the curtain, to wave her child a last good-bye. The carriage started, turned the corner of the street, and was lost in thousands of other carriages which swell the life and the noise of Paris.

Since then they have never met. Never.

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